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THE INTERVIEW
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MUHAMMAD ALI
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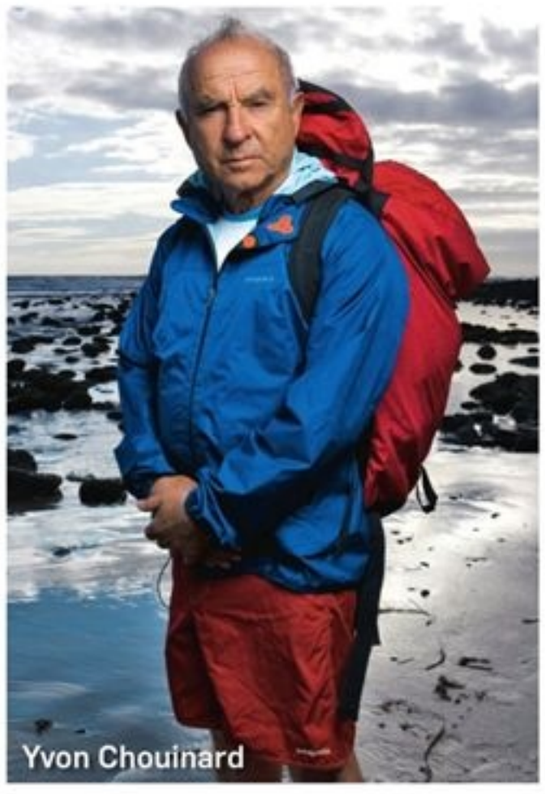
In the spectrum of seasons, May is a dynamite month. Summer dresses appear and, in them, radiant women. Tequila shots for Cinco de Mayo. Top down on the convertible. It's all happening now. Thank you for spending some of your downtime with us. We're pleased to offer a wild piece of fiction called *Cannibal,* by the master of weird **Chuck Palahniuk.** It's about a high school kid who's particularly adept at cunnilingus. So much so, in fact, that his talent turns his life upside down in ways he could never have imagined. Veteran journalist **John H. Richardson** brings us the chilling story *El Gringo Loco* this month. How does an upper-middle-class white college grad from Portland end up south of the border, running drugs for one of the most violent cartels in Mexico? This story sounds like fiction—but it's real. **Peter Dinklage** enthusiastically tackles our *20Q.* If you think Dinklage is funny on-screen, wait until you meet him off-screen. The actor riffs on his sex life and his character on the HBO series *Game of Thrones.* **Yvon Chouinard** has his own peculiar sense of humor. The 74-year-old founder of Patagonia, which has been described as more of a movement than a company, has a unique perspective on things—one worthy of hearing, as we learn in *The Accidental Capitalist,* by Craig Vetter. "Evil is stronger than good," Chouinard has said. "I firmly believe that." The handsome gent pictured under Chouinard is our articles editor, **Hugh Garvey.** Thanks, Hugh, for producing the consummate guides to modern living: *Cracking the Bar Code* (secrets from America's finest bartenders), *The New Grand Tour* (today's coolest destinations for the discerning gentleman) and *Retro Renovation* (the ultimate urban retreat, courtesy of architect-tastemaker-restaurateur **Taavo Somer**). Next up, we have a pair of *Playboy Interviews* for you. **Muhammad Ali** has plenty to say in our classic interview, which originally appeared in 1975. What's it like to get slugged by Joe Frazier? The Greatest explains. We also get up close and personal with **J.J. Abrams,** the director and/or writer behind a shocking number of your favorite movies and television shows. As you no doubt know, Abrams has been tapped to direct the next *Star Wars* movie, and his latest film, *Star Trek Into Darkness,* opens this month. Finally, there's **Tamara Ecclestone,** the "Billion $$ Girl." In *The Diamond Heiress,* the British TV personality and daughter of Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone reveals all to photographer **Tony Kelly.** And we mean *all.* And you wonder why we love the month of May. Think of this issue as a Memorial Day weekend party. Shall we get it started?

Chuck Palahniuk

John H. Richardson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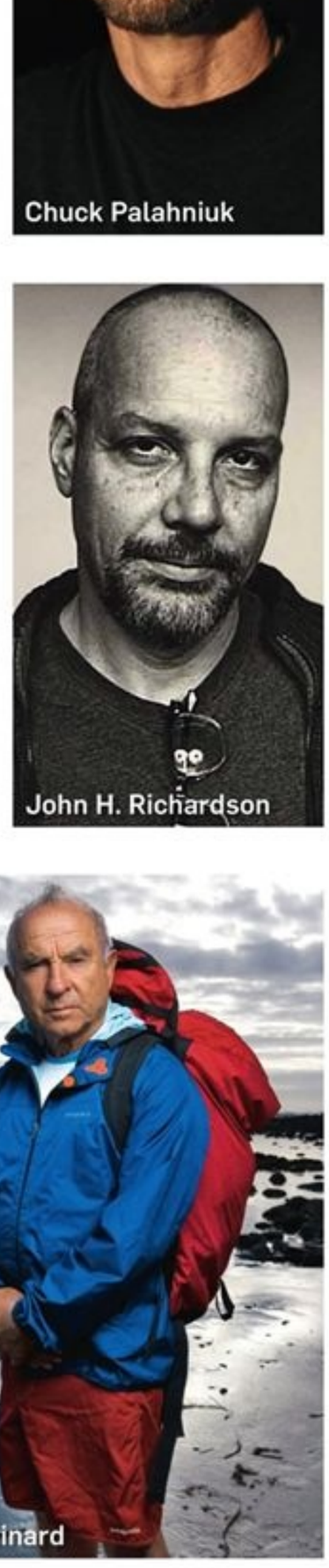
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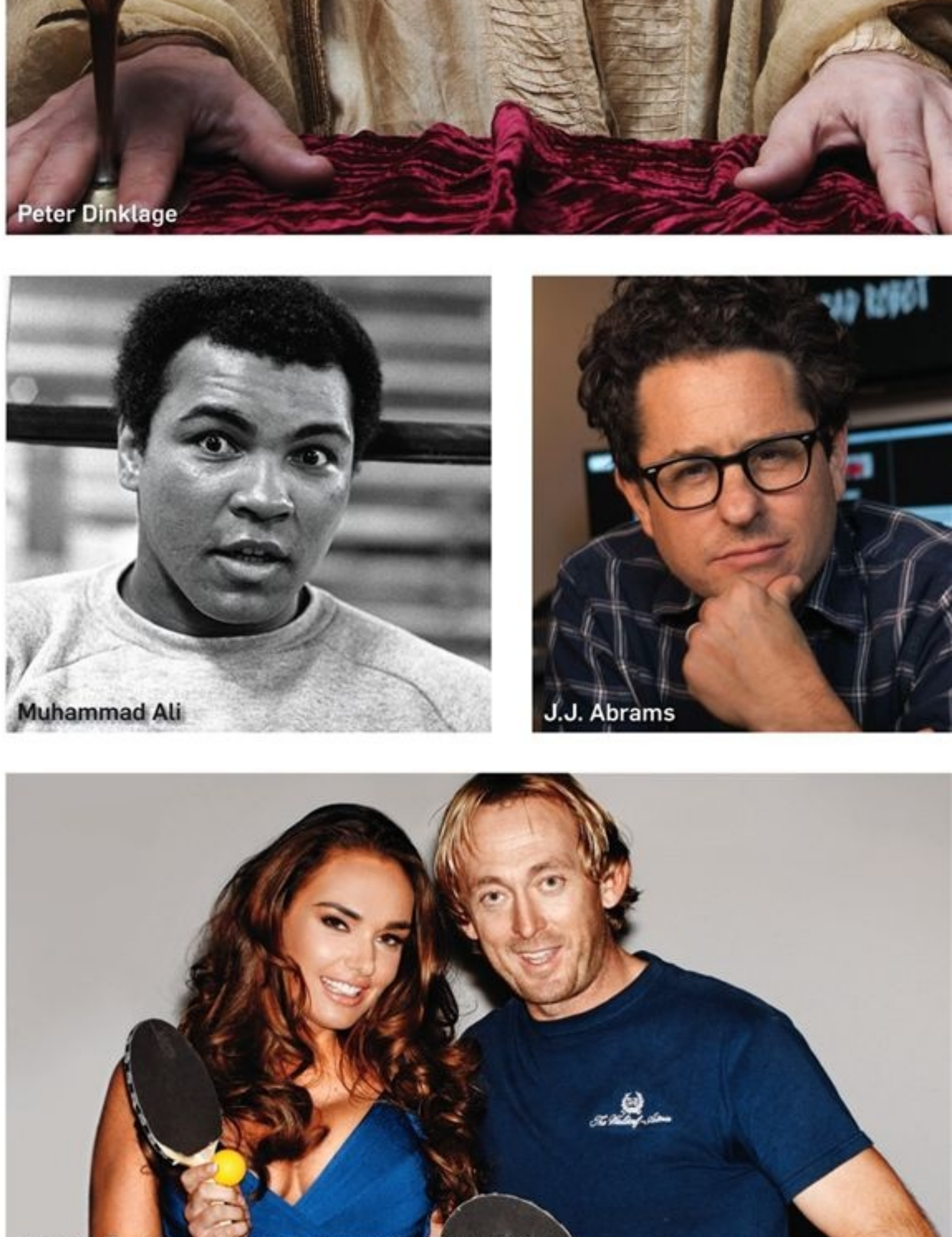
Peter Dinklage

Muhammad Ali

J.J. Abrams


Tamara Ecclestone and photographer Tony Kelly

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Tamara Ecclestone

COVER STORY
With the dazzling Tamara Ecclestone gracing our cover, our Rabbit proves he's a girl's best friend.

Photography, this page and cover, by **TONY KELLY**

GOOD ENGINEERING OBEYS THE LAWS OF PHYSICS.

GREAT ENGINEERING DEFIES THEM.

They're stubborn, inflexible and steadfast. Every engineer knows these laws need to be accepted and respected, but Mazda engineers would rather master the laws of physics than give in to them. They'd prefer to rise above the obstacles they present, finding bold solutions to make the laws serve their goals instead of obstructing them. The MX-5 Miata is a perfect example.

Painstakingly engineered to possess near-perfect balance, 50/50 front to rear with the driver in the driver's seat. To prove our point, the image you see is real—no wires or strings attached, just great engineering at work. It's this kind of thinking that's empowered the MX-5 Miata to achieve its legendary handling, not to mention the title as the top-selling and most-raced roadster* on Earth.

*Based on Sports Car Club of America racing data.

To design a car to achieve such feats requires an obsession, and that's just what we have. For us, driving is an obsession, and how our cars perform while doing it keeps us up at night. But at the end of the day, it's this dedication that separates our cars from the rest.

Because for us, if it's not worth driving, it's not worth building.®
We build Mazdas. What do you drive? See the MX-5 Miata balance for yourself at Facebook.com/Mazda

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THE WORLD OF PLAYBOY

HEF SIGHTINGS, MANSION FROLICS AND NIGHTLIFE NOTES

MARY EUGENIA O'CONNOR 1928–2013

In January we lost Hef's longtime executive assistant and the matriarch of the Playboy family. Sitting at Hef's right side for almost half a century, Mary O'Connor was one of his longest relationships and the lioness of both the company and the Mansion. At PMW she was our favorite girl next door; away from work she was a gracious hostess who threw notorious dinner parties and card games at her Valley Village home. O'Connor began working for Hef in Chicago and followed him to Los Angeles, where she was at her desk right up until the end. As Hef said, "We loved her more than words can say."

COOPER HEFNER ROCKS WITH THE KILLERS IN VEGAS

"I was in Las Vegas for work, but our business model does not follow the motto 'Don't mix business with pleasure,' so I went to the Killers concert," says Cooper Hefner. At their show in the Cosmopolitan's Chelsea club, the band asked Playboy's prince to join them backstage, where he chatted with guitarist Dave Keuning, bassist Mark Stoermer, drummer Ronnie Vannucci Jr. and frontman Brandon Flowers about music, the magazine and how the two fit together. "It's always special for me to meet individuals who have impacted my life with music and art," says Cooper.

PLAYBOY ISRAEL

"I'm proud to see PLAYBOY Israel embark on its mission to play an important role in strengthening freedom of speech, freedom of choice and freedom of the press," Hef said at the launch of a Hebrew-language edition of the magazine for the holy land. "So many of the core values of the magazine are also the core values of the country and the society."

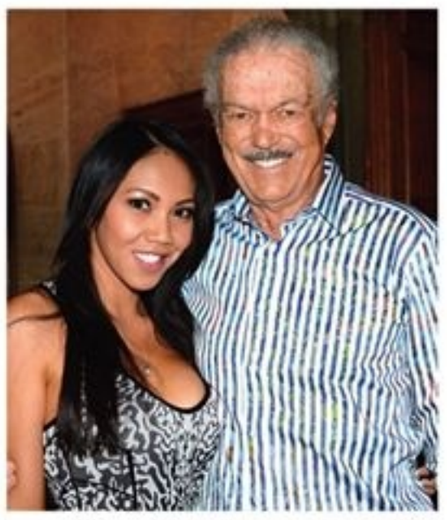
HANGIN' WITH HEF

PLAYBOY JAZZ FEST ANNOUNCEMENT

The Playboy Jazz Festival trumpeted in a new era when it was announced that Bill Cosby, event host for 33 years, had passed the master of ceremonies torch to comedian George Lopez. The former Emmys co-host said it was a "most tremendous honor" to receive the microphone from Cosby. Lopez will preside over the 35th annual festival on June 15 and 16 at the Hollywood Bowl. This year will feature the sweet sounds of George Duke, Hubert Laws, Herbie Hancock, Sheila E., Poncho Sanchez and other artists, as well as an 80th-birthday tribute to Quincy Jones.

OSCAR NIGHT AT THE MANSION

We'd like to thank the Academy for giving us a reason to gather family, Playmates and stars for Oscar night. Statuette stand-ins made for photo ops as cocktails and popcorn were served to Alex Thomas, Jon Lovitz, Hef and Crystal Hefner, Jaslyn Ome, and Caya and Keith Hefner—who won the pool.



DEAR PLAYBOY

Who's That Girl?

I've read every issue of PLAYBOY since 1972. I've also traveled all over the world and seen thousands of attractive women. But never in my life have I laid eyes on a woman as breathtaking as your March cover model. I beg you, tell me who she is.

Steven Cohen
Panama City, Florida

I am loving the art direction of your covers; every month is a sweet surprise. But I can't find the name of the March cover model or the two women who appear with her in *The Language of Lingerie*. Who are they?

Fernando Vasconcelos
Recife, Brazil

Our comely March cover girl with the come-hither gaze is Ukrainian model Liza Kei. Here's another look at her amazing between-the-sheets shot. You're welcome.

SPELLBOUND

I love Playmate Ashley Doris's pictorial (*Flower Power,* March). Hats off to photographer Sasha Eisenman. Please let Sasha know he has a fan for life.

Joey Munguia
Laredo, Texas

I'm not the first person to say or think this, but PMOY 2007 Sara Jean Underwood is the most beautiful woman ever to grace the surface of this planet. Thanks for the pix in October's *Playmate News*. How about another pictorial?

Bob Easton
Grande Prairie, Alberta

Karolina Szymczak has captured my dreams (*The Muse,* March). I hope this is the first of many appearances.

Roger Brandenburg
Des Moines, Iowa

JUST ADD RUM

Your *How to Party Like a Gentleman* guide (December) is very cool. However, you do your guests a disservice by offering whiskey, vodka, gin and tequila but no rum ("The Ultimate Self-Serve Bar"). I suggest DonQ (Puerto Rico's best-selling brand) and Ron del Barrilito (dark and great for sipping). Enjoy!

Miguel Gonzalez
San Juan, Puerto Rico

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Radical-chic types like Hollywood producer Bert Schneider fascinate me (*The Big Cigar,* January/February). They achieve fame and fortune but claim to disdain the capitalist system that gives them freedom to create. Any sane man would have pulled the plug on Black Panthers leader Huey Newton. Instead Schneider shoveled Newton money so the Marxist thug could conduct his Stalin-like purges from a penthouse. Then, given the chance to reside in Fidel Castro's workers' paradise, Newton hightailed it back to the bad old USA.

Joseph Kutch
Pineville, Louisiana

EASY RIDER

I'm sure your readers who are Honda Gold Wing owners got a chuckle out of your claim in *Thunder Road* (March) that the BMW K 1600 GTL "matches the Gold Wing in long-distance comfort." That may be true if you ride solo, but I'd be willing to bet that after doing a 600-mile day on a 1600 the passenger, and probably the driver, would be ready to trade. The BMW is too small to carry two adults comfortably. My wife and I have traveled thousands of miles together on Gold Wings and other bikes, and no other motorcycle compares.

Sam Martin
Melbourne, Florida

WILL FREEDOM REIGN?

Other than the U.S. State Department, did anyone believe the uprisings across northern Africa would result in democracies (*The Cold Arab Spring,* March)? A free society requires that a vast majority of the populace respect the rights of others to express unpopular beliefs. It also requires that a vast majority respect the rights of others to do things they may not approve of but that don't hurt anyone else. Neither condition is anywhere close to being the case in the Muslim world.

Arab Spring: the complexity of change.

Paul Thiel
Crescent Springs, Kentucky

MEN AND MONEY

Joel Stein's *Men* column "Why Money Makes Us Squirm" (January/February) is hilarious and true. In my experience as a psychotherapist, I have found that it is easier for most men and women to talk about sex or childhood traumas than about money, even with their families. In addition to the fact that we live in an adolescent nation of chronic overspenders, a lot of emotional issues are wrapped up in our finances, including love, power, self-esteem, happiness, security, freedom and so on. Stein writes that "women actually see money as something they use just to buy things." That's true, to a point. Many men are more likely to measure dominance by personal wealth, but some women measure their status by who has the bigger house or pricier clothes. Women use money less to jockey for power but have a terrible time negotiating for their self-interests and tend to give away the store to loved ones. The healthiest approach is to use money as a tool to accomplish goals that align with your values rather than solely as a way to achieve and measure status.

Olivia Mellan
Washington, D.C.

Mellan is author of Money Harmony (moneyharmony.com).

KEEPING THE PEACE

It's amazing but perhaps not surprising that readers continue to comment on your September 2012 *Playboy Interview* with noted atheist Richard Dawkins (*Dear Playboy,* March). I have no quarrel with believers or nonbelievers, but I am concerned about people's tendency to stereotype the beliefs of those they disagree with and then demean them for having those beliefs. Dawkins may be right about some of the intellectual frailties of the faithful, but he shouldn't belittle believers in such a hostile and ridiculous way. Those of us acquainted with the many fine, courageous and compassionate people of various spiritual traditions are aware that for them faith has proven to be a source of strength in a world infected with enormous violence and injustice.

Peter Johnson
Superior, Wisconsin

In March I couldn't wait to open your fine magazine, but for the first time it was for the interviews, not the photos. Chris

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Hardwick rules (*20Q*). The *Playboy Interview* with Jimmy Kimmel is great, and the Q&A with Hunter S. Thompson (*Playboy Classic*) is icing on the cake. Some 40 years later he's still edgy. I also love that people are still writing about the Dawkins interview. I hope that discussion never ends.

Anthony Pennza
Cleveland, Ohio

SUBURBAN AFFAIRS

The suburbs may be dying, but their death is being engineered by politicians, not by society ("The Suburbs Are Dead," *Forum,* January/February). Over the past 20 years traditional low-income housing projects have been torn down to make room for single-family homes or empty lots. This has displaced thousands of poor apartment dwellers to the suburbs. In the late 1990s the federal government gave an apartment complex in my area money to renovate on the condition that a majority of its residents be low-income renters. The complex had thrived for years as a starting point for young couples and a last home for retirees. Now it has become a blighted area, with the local grocery store closing. On the flip side, the federal government has been financing the construction of luxury apartments in abandoned factories downtown that no poor person could ever afford.

David Brogan
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

It's not that the suburbs are dead, it's that they are now more like the cities from which people, particularly white people, have escaped. Increasingly the suburbs are a mirror of the Third World countries that America has become due to massive immigration (legal and illegal) over the past 50 years. Some will try to gentrify the cities and eliminate the poor in those selected enclaves. Others will move to "new suburbs" to escape the old suburbs now that they are more "diverse." Any historical study of population and housing demographics reflects this.

Frank Goudy
Cuba, Illinois

For more letters on the burbs, see page 47.

FAN LETTERS

I've been reading PLAYBOY for 20 years and have never been as impressed with the writing and the pictorials as I've been in the past 18 months or so. The articles, the covers, the Playmate of the Year and nearly every other woman who has graced your pages have been better than ever. In these tumultuous times it's a pleasure to read brave and important articles, particularly about the rights we value in the privacy of our bedrooms. Your recent models share a grand beauty that includes a natural, colorful look. It's also nice to see more brunettes (especially Latinas). Thanks for a fantastic stretch of issues.

Jeremy Gallant
Hampden, Maine

I'm 53 and I just read my first issue of PLAYBOY. Like all guys, I grew up sneaking my dad's copies, but at the time I only thumbed through them. However, I recently became a *Battlestar Galactica* fan and wanted to see more of Tricia Helfer, so I bought the February 2007 issue on eBay. As a bonus it has an interview with Bettie Page, another woman I admire. Within minutes I had started to read the issue from cover to cover—ads, cartoons, snippets, gossip, everything. What a great magazine. You have a new loyal reader.

Patrick Murphy
Fayetteville, North Carolina

REDNECK COUNTRY

As a longtime "hixploitation" aficionado, I thoroughly enjoyed Stephen Rebello's look back at the making of the film *Smokey and the Bandit* (*The Birth of Redneck Cinema,* March). My only quibble would be with the article's title, as *Smokey* represents less the birth of redneck cinema than the crest of a wave. Burt Reynolds had firmly established his good-old-boy persona years earlier, first in *Deliverance* and then in the underrated moonshine action picture *White Lightning*. (Reynolds's crucial addition of a mustache would have to wait for the latter movie's sequel, *Gator*.) But the redneck-hero archetype dates back

Redneck nation: Has it jumped the shark?

at least as far as Robert Mitchum's role in 1958's *Thunder Road*. As for today's redneck characters, most of them can be found on reality television, which is full to bursting with the truckers, moonshiners, gator hunters and other types Reynolds would have played back in the day.

Scott Von Doviak
Austin, Texas

Von Doviak is author of Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema.

BUTT SERIOUSLY

A punch line in March's *Party Jokes*—"At least you got your asshole licked"—is so offensive it leads me to believe your editors are a bunch of perverts. If you think your readership is composed primarily of asshole lickers, I do not want to be considered part of it.

Robert Stabile
Bonita Springs, Florida

You should have seen the punch line we wanted to use.

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MOIST SNUFF

PLAYBOY

Afterhours

- MAY -
2013

BECOMING ATTRACTION

JESSICA PARKER KENNEDY

• It takes a special woman to play with pirates. "I can do the sweet girl. That's easy," says the Canadian actress, referring to her stint on *90210*. "Being seductive is a whole other thing." Thus describes Jessica's latest role as Max, a "bad bitch" prostitute in director Michael Bay's upcoming pirate TV show, *Black Sails*. "Max is smarter than most pirates and has killer French sex appeal," Jessica says. "She can push a pirate's bliss button." Trust us, she's a treasure.

Photography by **MICHAEL EDWARDS/ MEINMYPLACE.COM**

THE BASEBALL HALL OF FAME IS A BIG STINKING MESS. A BASEBALL LEGEND'S SON TRIES TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE GAME

• In January the Baseball Writers' Association of America elected not to elect to the Hall of Fame any of the many qualified candidates on this year's ballot, for various goofily righteous reasons, most of them having to do with performance-enhancing drugs and their long, paranoid shadow. Empty ballots were filed. Protest votes were cast for Jack Morris, whose lustrous mustache was presumably grown without the use of PEDs. Crotchety columns were penned. Salty radio appearances were made. It was a bad time. None of that is why Dale Murphy received just 18.6 percent of the vote in his 15th and final year on the ballot.

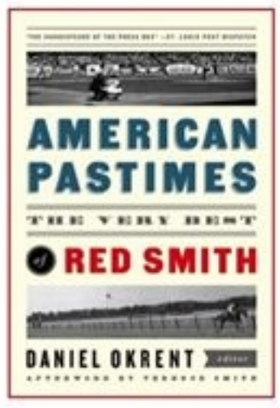
Murphy is a seven-time All-Star and two-time National League MVP who was his era's very definition of whole-milk ballplayer wholesomeness, but he was judged not to have been quite great enough for quite long enough. Other stars from the doomed 2013 ballot will eventually make the Hall of Fame, but Murphy—who won't—may wind up being the most influential.

If this year's Hall of Fame vote was puffed up, ridiculous and wrong, it wasn't exactly unfamiliar. It is always at least a little like this—voters work out decades-old grudges, glory in the authority to apply arbitrary rules in arbitrary ways, evince a sour, dour conservatism so fatuous it makes Sean Hannity look like Edmund Burke. But while there's still a dearth of accountability and perspective from BBWAA voters, there is also an increasing sense that things need to change. And Dale Murphy, of all people, stands at the center of this reform movement.

Maybe that's a bit much. The online movement on Murphy's behalf—spearheaded by his son Taylor—is no revolution, and the devout, humble Dale Murphy is no revolutionary. But it feels like a start: Taylor Murphy built support for his father's candidacy by posting on Reddit, launching a Change.org petition and serving as a cheerleader on various social media. His pitch was grounded on his father's integrity and character—identified as important criteria in the BBWAA guidelines and by many of the protest voters—as much as on his career stats. "A combination of respect for the game and skill is what the Hall of Fame claims to be looking for," Taylor wrote. "Yet Dale Murphy has been on the outside looking in for 14 years."

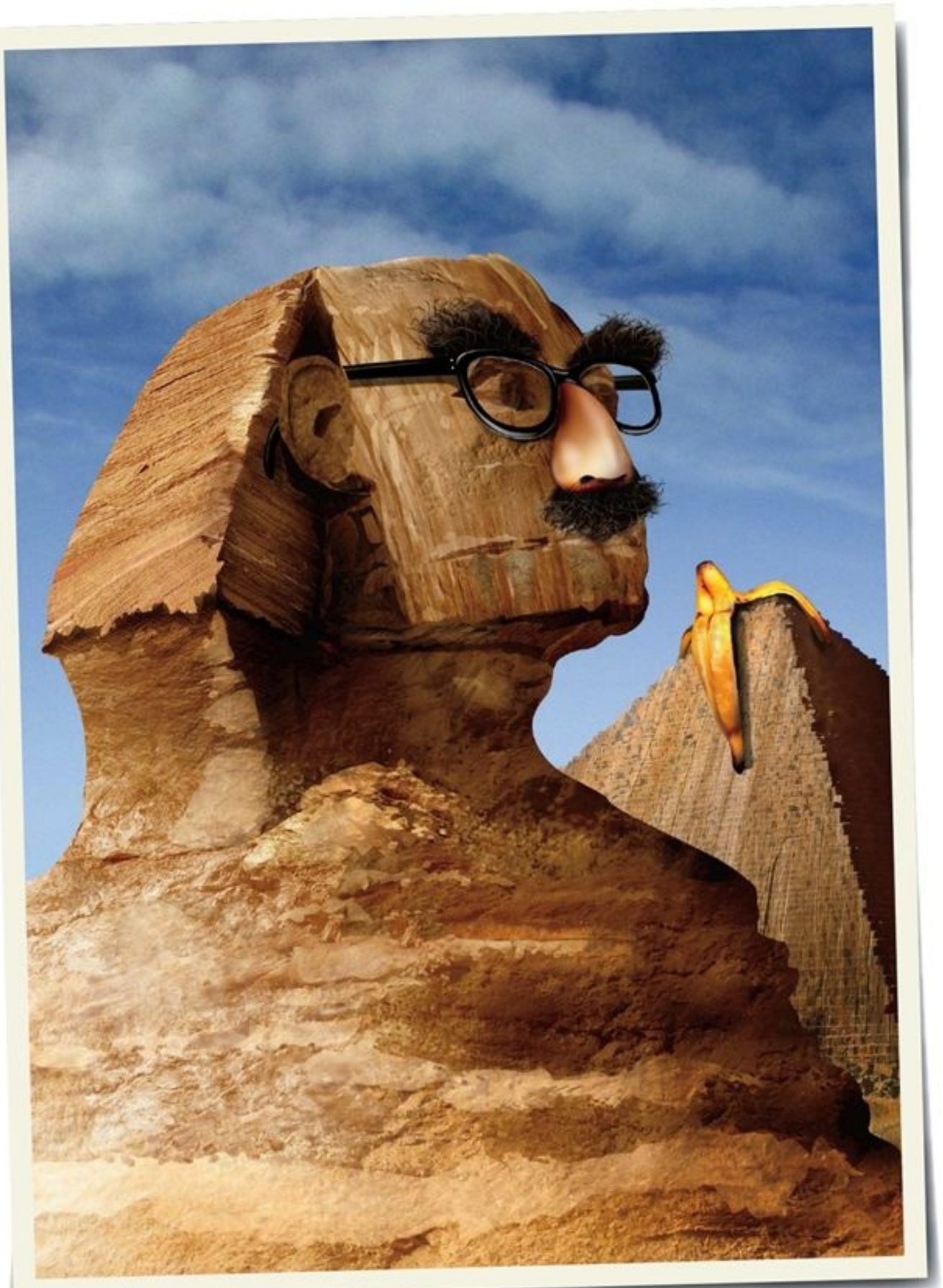
It didn't work, of course. Despite support from players such as Justin Verlander and Curt Schilling, the petition tapped out one third of the way to its goal of 25,000 signatures. Online campaigns may not be the best way to influence or shame crusty septuagenarian sports columnists. But Taylor Murphy's campaign worked both to highlight the selective application of the character clause—if it had mattered to voters as much as it suddenly seems to, Dale Murphy should have sailed in on his first ballot—and to remind us that the Hall of Fame matters to people outside the grumpy, grievance-driven club of voters. Fans can neither vote writers out of the BBWAA nor vote Dale Murphy into the Hall of Fame, and that won't change anytime soon. But revolutions have started in defense of figures far less worthy than Dale Murphy.—*David Roth*

RED ALL OVER



→ Red Smith (1905–1982) was one of the giants of 20th century journalism. Over five decades he wrote hundreds of masterful columns about baseball, fishing and boxing for the *New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times.* Collected here are 576 pages of sports writing at its finest.

Photography by **SATOSHI**



LAUGH LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

AN UNDERGROUND COMEDY MOVEMENT GROWS IN THE WAKE OF TURMOIL

• Blocks from Cairo's Tahrir Square, where protesters once clashed violently with police, people are laughing their asses off. The occasion is the one-year anniversary of Egypt's first stand-up comedy collective, Al Hezb El Comedy ("the Comedy Party"). Inside the tiny space local comedian Rami Boraie mentions Mohamed Morsi and a chorus of boos shows deep disappointment in Egypt's Islamist president. Boraie plunges forward, describing an interview with Australian prime minister Julia Gillard and Morsi during which he shamelessly adjusted his junk on international TV. "He spent 30 seconds adjusting his erection. You know, Mubarak's suits always had his name written as the pinstripes. I guess Morsi's suits will have a pocket for his rocket." The audience erupts in laughter.

Egypt still lacks any dedicated comedy clubs, but an increasing number of Arabic- and English-speaking comedians are finding makeshift stages in cafés and cultural institutes, performing for anyone who will listen. The material centers on the absurdities of Egyptian life, from traffic to being a newlywed. The only topic that remains taboo is, of course, religion. Comedian Marwan Imam says, "We have seen an explosion of arts since the revolution—all the pent-up rage transformed into expression. Egyptians love to laugh, so what better way is there to reach them? Without humor, the people would start killing each other over the traffic alone."
—*Maha El Nabawi*

HOOKED UP

TECHNOLOGY FINALLY SOLVES THE WORLD'S GREATEST PROBLEM—YOUR SEX LIFE

• It's time to download a sex life. Nearly 14 million people are already tapped into online dating, and mobile developers have rolled out a new batch of apps that use GPS and disappearing texts to aid the process. From setting up blind dates to dialing up foreplay, nothing is off-limits. Here's how technology is turning your smartphone into the best wingman yet.—*Shane Michael Singh*

1.
MEET UP

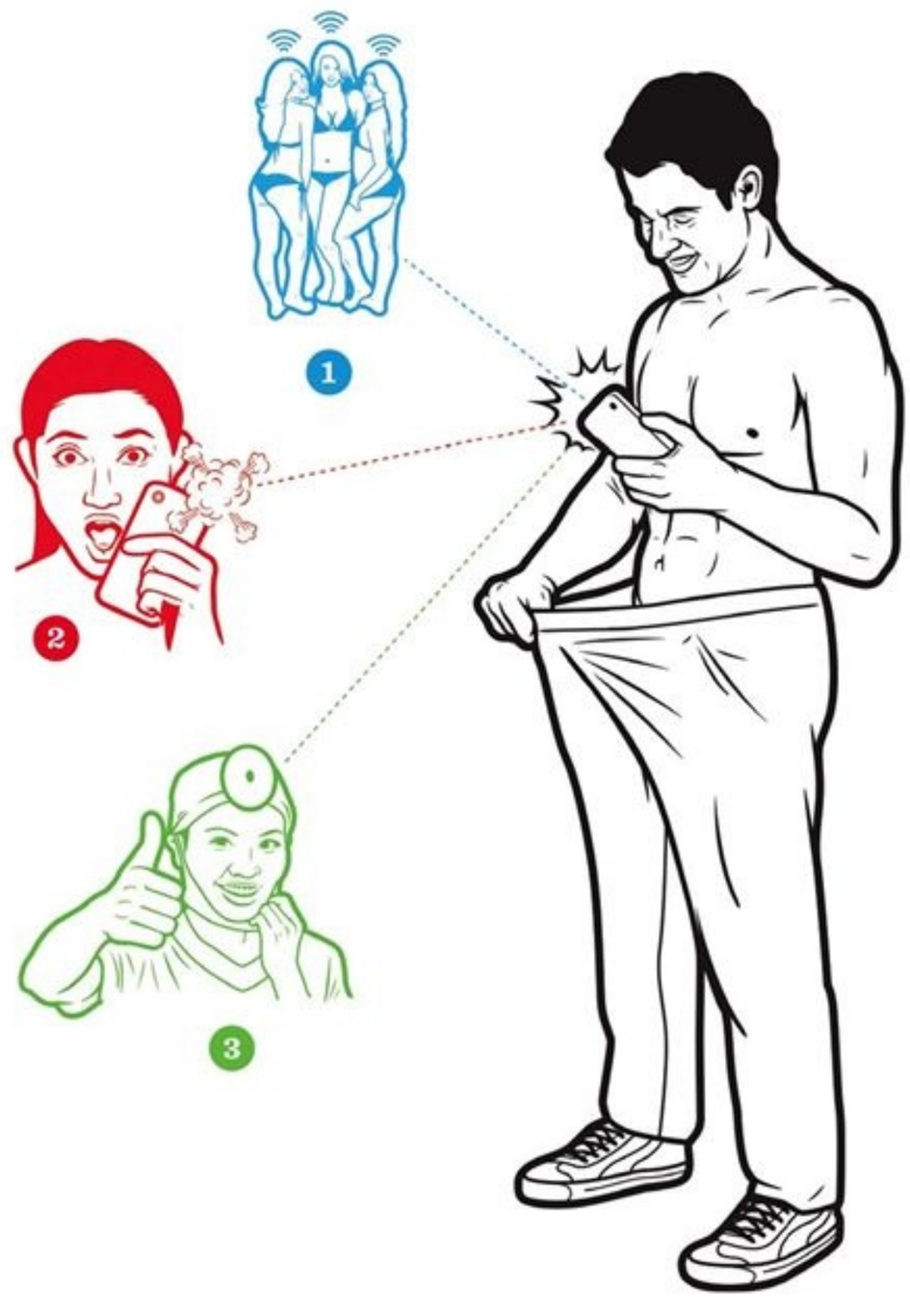
→ Call it 4G speed dating. App makers dropped the algorithms used by sites like eHarmony and returned to the basics of any hookup: convenience. OkCupid's **Crazy Blind Date** app uses GPS to find your next rendezvous. Input when you're free, select a meeting spot and wait for someone to bite. The profile pics of other users are pixelated, hence the blind date. Be brave.

2.
FLIRT

→ Romance now falls somewhere between an emoticon and a nude photo, and new apps aim to prevent the next Weinergate. **Snapchat** and **Züm** allow you to send images or videos that automatically self-destruct after viewing. Snapchat can add captions to your objets d'art and will notify you if the recipient takes a screenshot of whatever you sent. No judgment here.

3.
GET DOWN

→ Play it safe before dropping trou. **MedXSafe,** a feature of MedXCom's health care app, allows you and a partner to instantly share verified STD test results by bumping phones. Then grab a (nondigital) condom and switch your phone to **Songza,** which features music playlists expertly curated for the art of lovemaking. May we suggest "Dirty Sexy Dubstep"?



CELL PHONE ILLUSTRATION BY TODD DETWILER; SPHINX ILLUSTRATION BY DEREK BACON

2.

3.

STRIP TEASE

DITCH LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD AND GO OLD SCHOOL OR NEW COOL IN SIN CITY

• We love a glamorous, brand-new casino packed with high-end boutiques, celebrity-chef restaurants and EDM-thumping nightclubs as much as the next player. But sometimes it seems as though strollers outnumber high rollers on the Strip and we yearn for more sin in Sin City. Fortunately, plenty of pleasure of a less theme-park sort can be found just off the Strip.

One of the pitfalls of even a short stay in Vegas is the fatigue that comes from the unrelenting stimulation of packed streets, the flashing cacophony of the casino floor and the parade of revelers toting cocktails in yard-long plastic Day-Glo cups. Even a player needs to pace himself with a restorative disco nap. Take advantage of the desert air—and more affordable rates—at **Red Rock** resort on the far western edge of the city or, to the south, at the **M Resort (1),** where you can book a room with a view of the Strip glittering in the distance and plan your attack.

1.

Get the party started with a visit to downtown Las Vegas, now dubbed the **Fremont Street Experience (2).** Despite the kitschy video light show and zip lines that hover overhead, the ground level of the original Vegas Strip is relatively unchanged and home to old-school casinos such as the **Golden Nugget** and the **4 Queens**—time capsules of an era free from such distractions as Cirque du Soleil and culinary careers built on Food Network fame. **Binion's,** the birthplace of the World Series of Poker, is the hard-core gambler's casino of choice (and with the slogan "Good whiskey. Good food. Good gamble," it better be).

Head east to witness firsthand the evolution of modern downtown Las Vegas. Hit **Commonwealth,** a multilevel bar and lounge with a rooftop patio, a Portland-worthy 20-slot bike rack out front and such hipsterati events as a pop-up tattoo parlor. Nearby **Downtown Cocktail Room** is a sultry, dimly lit speakeasy, the perfect place to sip textbook renditions of classic cocktails, including the Between the Sheets, first served at Harry's Bar in Paris in the 1930s.

If you're an enlightened food dude, eat like a chef at **Raku (3)** in the city's Chinatown. Here you'll find casino chefs on their nights off eating exquisite charcoal-grilled Kobe beef and soy-glazed foie gras until three in the morning.

MOB SCENE

→ Man cannot live on booze, food and gambling alone, so break it up with some culture, Vegas style. Tour the Mob Museum, where you can fire a tommy-gun simulator and see a bullet-bitten wall shot up during the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

NEVER SLEEP

FROM DUSK TO DAWN IN VEGAS

9:00 P.M.

DIVE IN

> Pull up a stool at Double Down Saloon, the dive-bar antithesis of a mixology lounge.

11:00 P.M.

DINE LIKE DINO

> Fuel up with a T-bone at Golden Steer Steakhouse, a Rat Pack hangout in the 1950s.

2:00 A.M.

FACE THE POKER

> Play a hand at Binion's and prepare to come up against serious competition.

6:00 A.M.

REFUEL

> Order a chicken-fried steak at Eat, downtown's latest greatest breakfast spot.

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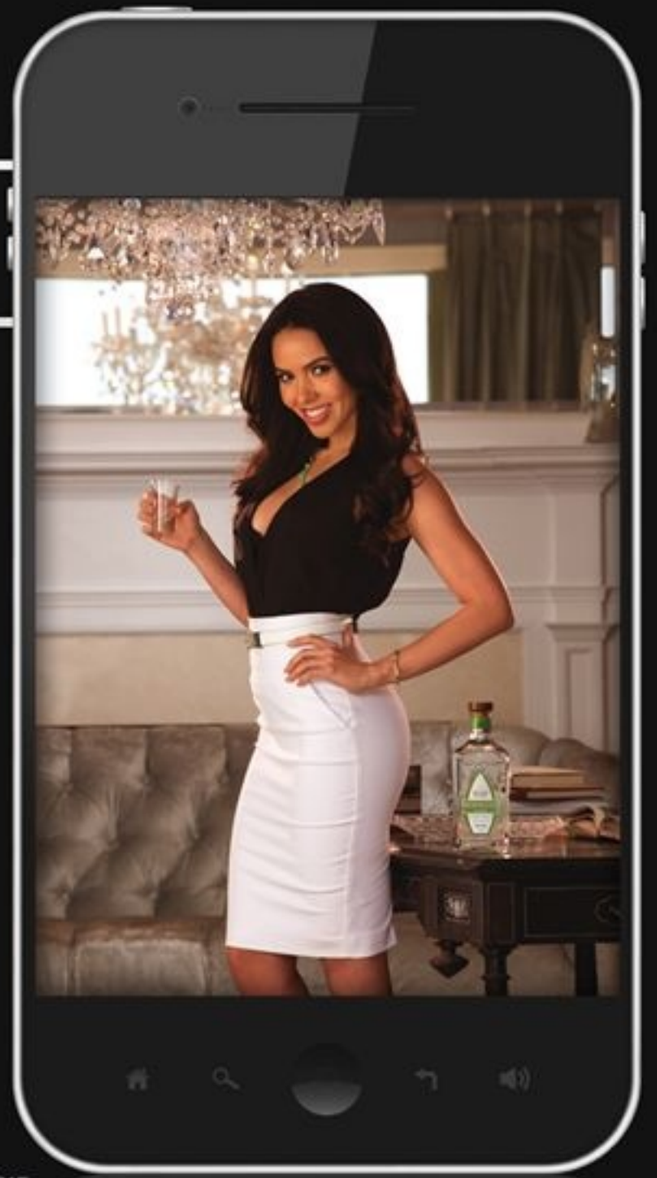

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MAKING THE CASE FOR *QUESO*

DROP THE VELVEETA AND COOK THIS MAXED-OUT TEX-MEX CHEESE DIP

• Cinco de Mayo serves dual, equally noble purposes: One, it commemorates Mexico's victory over the French invasion. Two, it's a darned fine excuse to eat all manner of fried, cheesy and spicy foods with some semblance of a culinary connection to Mexico. In Texas, where Los Angeles–based chef Josef Centeno grew up, *queso fundido* was the classic party dish: an unctuous, cheesy dip that cried out for crisp tortilla chips and ice-cold beer. After putting in the better part of two decades cooking in some of the best restaurants on the East and West Coasts, Centeno decided to take *queso* to the next level at his newest venue, Bar Amá in downtown Los Angeles. The menu at Bar Amá is a refined homage to down-home Tex-Mex food (think Frito pie with beef tongue and *fideo* with octopus). Here the *queso* improves on tradition too: It's rich, tangy, unbelievably silky and packs the twin capsaicin punch of chili powder and spicy Mexican chorizo. Not only must you avoid Velveeta at all costs, you are required to use sharp cheddar—mild makes for a grainy dip.

BAR AMÁ'S *QUESO* WITH CHORIZO

Serves 4

- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2½ cups half-and-half
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- 2 cups Monterey Jack cheese, grated
- 1¼ tsp. salt
- 1½ tsp. chili powder
- ½ lb. Mexican chorizo
- 2 tbsp. red onion, diced
- 2 tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped

1.

→ Mix cornstarch with ¼ cup cold half-and-half until completely dissolved. Bring remaining 2¼ cups half-and-half to boil and stir in cornstarch slurry until thickened, about one minute. Add cheese one cup at a time and stir briskly until completely melted. If more half-and-half is needed, adjust to desired consistency. Add salt and chili powder. Reserve in a Crock-Pot or other slow cooker set to medium.

2.

→ Remove casing from chorizo and cook in a medium frying pan over low heat, stirring occasionally and breaking up with a spoon until cooked through and browned. Remove with a slotted spoon. Garnish melted cheese with chorizo, onion and cilantro. Serve with tortilla chips.

Crock Star

→ *Trick out your party arsenal with a slow cooker: It can keep your queso fundido at full melt, your chili from getting chilly and your mulled wine piping hot. And you don't need anything super fancy. A classic Crock-Pot is priced around $20.*

Photography by **MISHA GRAVENOR**

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT HARKNESS

BIG IN JAPAN

THE JAPANESE TAKE ON WHISKEY IS FINALLY MAKING A SPLASH

• Ever since Bill Murray played an actor turned whiskey pitchman in *Lost in Translation,* thirst for the Japanese version of scotch has been growing. Well, it's finally Suntory—and Nikka—time in the U.S., with these two Japanese distillers distributing more widely than ever. Although Japanese distillers borrow from Scottish whiskey-making traditions (Suntory owns Scotland's Bowmore Distillery), their product is designed to complement the Japanese way of drinking, which is customarily with food. To make whiskey more food-friendly, drinkers in Japan dilute it with water or ice. This is why Japanese whiskey is blended to be most delicious at higher levels of dilution, when aromas open and flavors are revealed. To which we say *kanpai*!

EASTERN PROMISES

THREE JAPANESE WHISKEYS TO TRY

TAKETSURU 12-YEAR PURE MALT
($70)

→ Slightly smoky and malty with subtle apple flavors. Enjoy this bottling from Nikka with a charcuterie platter.

HIBIKI 12-YEAR
($65)

→ Distilled in 11 uniquely shaped stills and aged in three kinds of oak, this smooth, rich Suntory whiskey is freakishly complex over ice, from first sip to watered-down last.

YAMAZAKI 12-YEAR SINGLE MALT
($60)

→ Floral and buttery with a honey sweetness, this single malt from Suntory makes a mellow new-style old fashioned.

Photography by **SATOSHI**

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT HARKNESS

- The - *Tokyo Highball*

→ *Whiskey and soda is the go-to cocktail in Japan. The traditional ratio is one part whiskey to three parts soda, but we prefer a stronger, one-to-one ratio.*

NO RAIN, NO GAIN

IN PRAISE OF THE TIMELESS AND STYLISH TRENCH COAT

• Some men fear the rain. Others face it bravely with foul-weather gear. We appreciate the modern marvels of Gore-Tex and other high-tech fabrics, but nothing tops the functional good looks of the trench coat, invented more than a century ago in England. It's one of those essential wardrobe items that spans generations and styles: Bogart detective dashing, *Quadrophenia* mod cool, *Say Anything* slacker rebel. Today nearly every designer has a trench in his or her collection ready for your interpretation, from street-style chain Uniqlo's $130 entry-level version to the iconic $1,295 Burberry London trench coat shown here.

TRENCHANT POINTS

1. EPAULETS GO

→ This detail on the shoulder is a hold-over from the trench coat's military past: It was first designed for use by the British military.

2. RAISE A FLAP

→ The extra-wide lapel can be folded over and buttoned up to keep out wind and rain.

3. BELT IT OUT

→ How you secure your belt can be a style statement: Buckled is basic, knotted is natty, tied behind your back is traditionally cool.

4. CHECKS, PLEASE

→ Burberry's trade-marked tartan pattern is often copied. The latest iteration is more elegant than imitations and incorporates a subtle red stripe.

Photography by **SATOSHI**

PROP STYLING: SONJA KROOP

GIVENCHY

GENTLEMEN
ONLY

THE NEW FRAGRANCE FOR MEN

GENTLEMEN
ONLY
GIVENCHY

SIMON BAKER
givenchybeauty.com

SEPHORA sephora.com

GIVENCHY

GENTLEMEN
ONLY

THE NEW FRAGRANCE FOR MEN

Lift to discover
GENTLEMEN
ONLY

I'M WITH THE BAND

SWITCH UP YOUR WATCH WITH MILITARY-INSPIRED NYLON NATO STRAPS

• Although watch collecting can seem limited to men with unlimited resources, at least one corner of the watch world has a low price of entry. Meet the nylon NATO strap. So called because of its origins in the British military, the NATO strap (known as the G10 by serious watch nerds) is a practical alternative to metal and leather straps: It is durable, affordable, nonreflective and easily cut off in emergencies. In the civilian world it's now being produced in bright colors and patterns that can be swapped out as easily as a necktie. With styles as cool as these, it's time to buckle up.

1.
TRUE BLUE
→ Dive in to spring with the casually elegant NATO Strap watch by Nautica.
—
$99

2.
FLIGHT PLAN
→ Hamilton's handsome Khaki Pilot Pioneer chrono has analog stopwatch functionality.
—
$595

3.
MOD SQUAD
→ The Quad watch by Nixon combines a minimalist face with patriotic flair.
—
$100

4.
MILITARY TIME
→ The Timex for J. Crew Vintage Field Army watch is as classic as it gets.
—
$150

5.
PREP SCHOOL
→ The Tachbrook watch by Smart Turnout London has a poppy, preppy appeal.
—
$130

Photography by **CHARLES MASTERS**

Get Strapped Like Bond

→ The obsession with NATO straps as style statement can be traced to the early Bond films. Sean Connery paired an expensive Rolex Submariner with a humble nylon strap—in keeping with his rule-breaking character. A vintage Submariner will set you back, but a nylon strap won't.

The James Bond Strap
$12
amazon.com

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS

By Stephen Rebello

• Everything about *Star Trek Into Darkness* screams upgrade. Thanks to director J.J. Abrams's 2009 *Star Trek* reboot and its $386 million worldwide box office haul, this follow-up's action and scale are *Dark Knight*–size massive. Benedict Cumberbatch (TV's *Sherlock*) turns up as a larger-than-life villain who makes life hell for the starship *Enterprise* crew, played by Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoë Saldana, Simon Pegg and Karl Urban, among others. Even the Klingons make a return. But according to John Cho, the movie's supremely smart and cool Sulu, for all its grit and dazzle, *Into Darkness* is very much in the Gene Roddenberry tradition. "Lives and bodies were in peril in the previous *Star Trek;* souls are in danger in this one," says Cho, who also stars in the *Harold & Kumar* comedies. "Let's just say that making decisions on the bridge of the *Enterprise* is a lot more complicated in this movie because you're not sure whether the decision makers are making the right moral decisions. It's a thrilling movie about growing tall and maturing. I'm a father, and this is a movie I'd want my son to see."

IRON MAN'S RIGHT-HAND MAN

Don Cheadle talks about his second stint playing Tony Stark's best bud, James "Rhodey" Rhodes, in Iron Man 3.

Q: What's it like being Tony Stark's wingman?

A: This one's more of a buddy movie for Rhodey and Tony but with a different set of challenges. Tony is volatile and unpredictable. Rhodey is pretty much the straight-man soldier. He has to defend Tony for doing things that don't seem sensible according to his own code of behavior.

Q: What was your reaction to seeing your "Iron Patriot" movie poster?

A: A friend said, "Do you realize the only black action superheroes in really big movies are Wesley Snipes in *Blade,* Michael Jai White in *Spawn* and now you? My man, it's dope." He's right. It is cool.

Q: Your costume looks great but potentially painful. How bad is it?

A: A lot is CGI, but there is an actual suit, and it's incredibly heavy, uncomfortable and cumbersome. If you want to drink, somebody has to bring a straw to your mouth. Going to the bathroom is a challenge. It's not fun.

Q: Is your character primed to become even more important in subsequent *Iron Man* flicks?

A: It sure feels as if we're on the road to bigger and better things for Rhodey. But I would just like to see people coming out of the movie looking satisfied, saying "Wow, that was great" and then running to get back in line.

TEASE FRAME

Nicole Beharie

Nicole Beharie is one object of a sex addict's affection in *Shame* (pictured). She's now in the baseball drama *42* alongside Harrison Ford.

DVD OF THE MONTH

THE IMPOSSIBLE

By Stacie Hougland

• This true story of a family that gets caught up—literally—in the 2004 tsunami that hit Thailand is as much about the kindness of strangers as it is about the immensity of the disaster, framed by a horrifyingly realistic tidal-wave sequence that packs a visceral punch. You have to watch—even if only through your fingers—as a gasping, injured Naomi Watts (in an Oscar-nominated performance) flails in the roaring, debris-filled floodwaters and struggles through the chaos to reunite with her husband (Ewan McGregor) and young sons. (BD) **Best extra:** a featurette on how director Juan Antonio Bayona and his team created the monster wave.

ALBUM OF THE MONTH

FOALS' *HOLY FIRE*

By Rob Tannenbaum

• Why are Foals almost completely unknown outside the United Kingdom? Their stirring, arcing guitar rock has the kind of heft and Blu-ray clarity that make people buy cow-size stereo systems, and their lyrics, in the grand tradition of Pink Floyd or Coldplay, would sound great shouted by 13,000 people in a basketball arena. In fact, Foals' new album, *Holy Fire,* is what Coldplay would sound like if Coldplay (a) weren't simps and (b) had a better drummer. You should savor the album's jittery, aggressive fuck-off song "Inhaler," then find 12,999 friends who feel the same. ¥¥¥¥

GAME OF THE MONTH

INJUSTICE

By Jason Buhrmester

• Men have many standard arguments that eat up hours in barrooms and basements. Beatles versus Stones. The designated hitter. And who would win in a fight—Batman or Superman? *Injustice: Gods Among Us* (360, PS3, Wii U) resolves the last by putting the mightiest heroes and villains from the DC Comics universe in *Mortal Kombat*–style grudge matches. The variety of superpowers and gadgets means you'll wield Wonder Woman's lasso to swing a car at Green Lantern or use Flash's speed to dodge a blow from Superman in locations such as the Watchtower and the Batcave. Just don't scratch the Batmobile. ¥¥¥

MUST-WATCH TV

RECTIFY ON SUNDANCE

By Josef Adalian

• *Rectify,* Sundance Channel's first try at a scripted dramatic series, isn't based on actual events, but its premise has become sadly familiar in recent years: A death-row inmate finds himself back in the real world after DNA evidence results in his release. In the case of Daniel Holden (Aden Young), freedom comes after he's been locked away for nearly two decades; understandably, he struggles as he shifts from dead man walking to walking among the living. But *Rectify* is just as interested in the effect Holden's return has on those around him, from the devoted sister (played by Abigail Spencer, left) who fought for his release to the philandering former prosecutor (Michael O'Neill) who sent him to jail (and is hell-bent on putting him back). It's compelling stuff, despite the often glacial pacing (an increasingly common problem with the new breed of cable shows). Young is riveting throughout, perfectly capturing the essence of a man who suddenly has a future but not a purpose. ¥¥¥

FAREWELL TO *THE OFFICE*

It's finally closing time for The Office. After eight years and 200 episodes we look at the most memorable lines uttered by Dunder Mifflin's hardly working employees.

• "Would I rather be feared or loved? Easy, both. I want people to be afraid of how much they love me."—*Michael*

• "I never really thought about death until Princess Diana died. That was the saddest funeral ever. That and my sister's."—*Kelly*

• "I love fake boobs. Oftentimes you find them on strippers."—*Kevin*

• "Every little boy fantasizes about his fairy-tale wedding."—*Andy*

• "Reject a woman and she will never let it go. One of the many defects of their kind. Also, weak arms."—*Dwight*

• "The only difference between me and a homeless man is this job. I will do whatever it takes to survive. Like I did when I was a homeless man."—*Creed*

• "That's what she said."—*Michael*

Time it takes the 2013 Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse to empty its 26.4-gallon fuel tank at 250 mph:

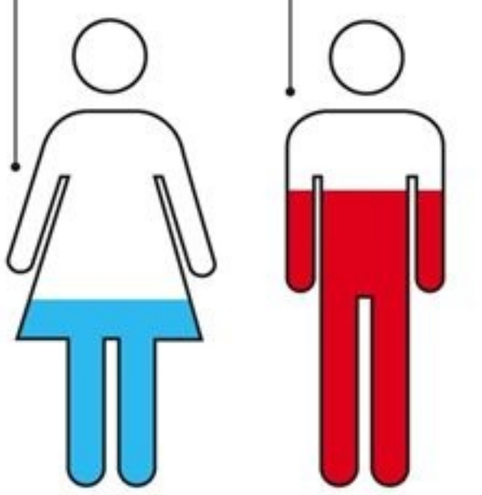
10.3 MINUTES

Time Michelin estimates its tires will last at that speed:

15 MINUTES

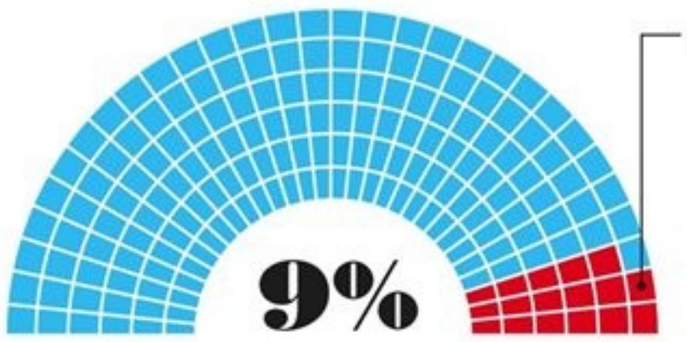
According to a recent Match.com survey:

44% of single women and **63%** of single men have had one-night stands.



28% of singles say they've had sex by the third date.

42% have enjoyed a "friends with benefits" relationship.



In a recent Public Policy poll, only 9% of Americans had a favorable view of Congress. Head lice, Nickelback, colonoscopies, root canals, Donald Trump, traffic jams, cockroaches, France, used-car salesmen and brussels sprouts all ranked higher.

Leaders attending the World Economic Forum ranked "discovery of alien life" as 1 of 5 possible "X factors," or unexpected events, that may change the world in the next 10 years.

Amount of money in the public bank account of the Zimbabwe government at the start of 2013.

21

Number of calories a man in his early to mid-30s burns during 6 minutes (the average length) of sex.

7

Number of calories he burns watching TV.

---

1 MILLION

Number of song downloads iTunes recently celebrated.

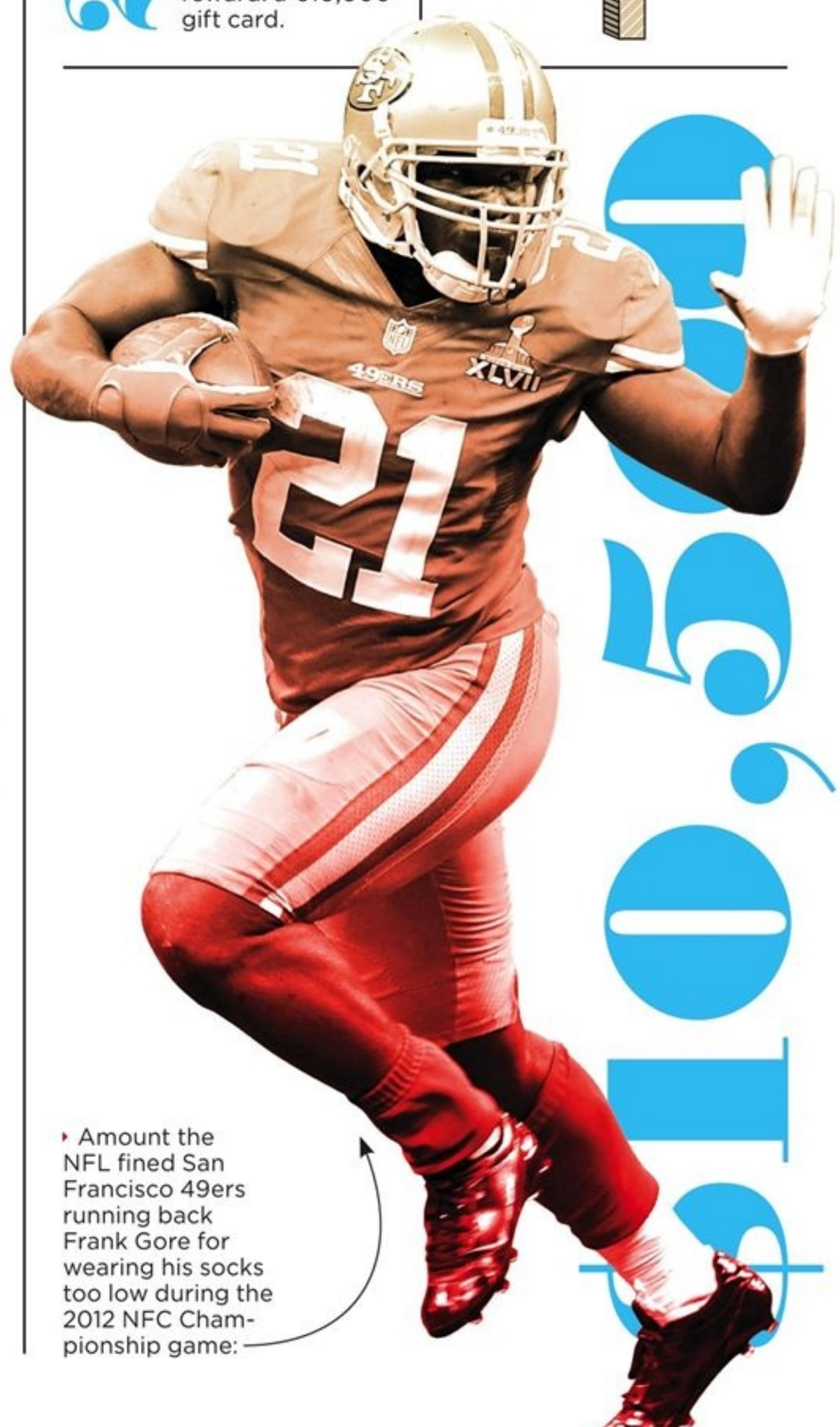
25 BILLION

The record-setting purchase, by a German customer: "Monkey Drums (Goksel Vancin Remix)," by Chase Buch. The customer's reward: a €10,000 gift card.

56% of people born after 1983 don't know the basis of *Roe* v. *Wade*.

16% believe it had to do with school desegregation.

Other answers: the death penalty and the environment.



$10,000

Amount the NFL fined San Francisco 49ers running back Frank Gore for wearing his socks too low during the 2012 NFC Championship game:

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THE BIG BENZ

M-B'S NEW GULLWING BLACK SERIES: POWERFUL, RARE AND ON THE LOOSE

• Mercedes-Benz uses the label Black Series to describe its most exclusive breed of automobile, a model loaded with every luxury add-on and motorsport upgrade in the company's arsenal. It's audacity on wheels, with the engineering to back it up. Until recently only four models in Benz history got this treatment. Here's the fifth: the SLS AMG Black Series coupe. The SLS AMG was already an eye-popping piece of machinery. When it launched in 2011—a modern-profile homage to M-B's 1950s gullwing—it looked like it could be the next vehicle to land on the moon (it was named PLAYBOY's Car of the Year). The new Black Series iteration is nothing less than the most powerful production M-B in existence. Our test-drive took us to the famous Paul Ricard racetrack in the south of France. When you pop the dramatic gullwing doors, it's like a curtain rising. Drama is about to begin. Track-tuned suspension grapples with a 622 hp V8 capable of zero to 60 in 3.5 seconds. Top speed: 195 mph. Add to it a titanium exhaust system and the best power-to-weight ratio of any Black Series ever. In a word: outrageous.

STATS

Engine: 6.2-liter V8

Horsepower: 622

Torque: 468 foot-pounds

Zero to 60: 3.5 seconds

Price: TBA

STATS

Engine: two-liter turbo flat four

Horsepower: 208

Torque: 258 foot-pounds

Zero to 60: 6.5 seconds

Price: $29,900

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

LOOK WHAT'S IN YOUR GARAGE: A NEW BENZ FOR LESS THAN 30 GRAND

→ Of all the cars Mercedes-Benz has launched in recent years, the new CLA sedan is the leading candidate to capture your heart. Why? It's sophisticated inside and out, as a Mercedes should be, and handles with the agility and aplomb expected from the German car giant. The real news is the price, which starts at $29,900 for a Benz big enough to seat four. That's cheaper than anything in BMW's lineup. Most Americans first saw the CLA in a Super Bowl ad. We arranged a more intimate tryst on winding European roads. The turbo four-cylinder thumps out 208 horsepower, and M-B claims the car's drag coefficient sets an aerodynamics world record. Impressed? We were. Expect the CLA in September.

THE ALFA MALE

SIZING UP ALFA ROMEO'S RISKY RETURN TO THE USA

SERGIO MARCHIONNE
Fiat-Chrysler CEO

*For Italophiles and gearheads alike, few sound bites brought more joy than the announcement in January that the long-awaited return of Alfa Romeo to the U.S. for the first time since 1995 will finally take place before the year is out. The first car to arrive will be the all-new mid-engine 4C sports car, which debuted at the Geneva auto show in March (*PLAYBOY *was there). A sedan, a crossover and an SUV will follow. The man behind the move—Fiat-Chrysler group CEO Sergio Marchionne—claims it makes sense. Fiat-Chrysler owns Alfa, which means Alfa can use Chrysler's infrastructure to hawk cars here. "For sure, it's coming back this year with the 4C," Marchionne said. The question is, will Americans buy Alfa Romeos? Are the problems that drove Alfa from our shores in 1995 still with us today? It's a fantastic gamble. This we know: We can't wait to get our hands on hot Italian machinery. As they say over there, ci sei mancato molto! (We missed you so much.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT HARKNESS

PICKUP LINES

HIT THE ROAD (OR ROAR OFF OF IT) IN YOUR PICK OF NEW TRUCKS

• No consumer product symbolizes America more than the almighty pickup. We buy more trucks than any other nation by far. As the old country-song trope goes, you can never trust a lover, but your pickup will never let you down. Of recent, nearly all the major players have relaunched their full-size trucks. Let's start with the new sheriff in town. The Ram 1500 (they don't call it Dodge anymore) is a serious pickup from a born-again company that knows how to make them. Choose from more than 30 variations, from the two-wheel-drive Tradesman ($22,640) to the four-wheel-drive Laramie Longhorn Crew Cab with a 5.7-liter Hemi V8 ($44,325). Pictured: the base Laramie ($35,665).

FORD F-150

→ Ford must be doing something right; the F-150 is the best-selling truck of any kind in the U.S. The company offers many flavors, from the bottom-end 2WD XL ($23,670) to the off-road SVT Raptor ($43,630) to the top-end Limited, a 3.5-liter 4WD with nearly every add-on you'll find in a luxury car ($52,895). Pictured: the XLT ($29,050).

CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500

→ GM's all-new Silverado 1500 (and its twin bro, the GMC Sierra) hits showrooms this summer (pricing TBA). While the styling isn't revolutionary, there are three new eco-friendly engines (topping out with a 6.2-liter V8) and lots of new interior tech (a sweet 4.2-inch dash display, for example). Pictured: the off-road-ready Z71 model.

TOYOTA TUNDRA

→ The Tundra hasn't sold as well as Toyota hoped. Still, the Japanese juggernaut is coming at the competition in an all-new 2014 Tundra. It arrives in summer with fresh styling and a choice of three engines (pricing TBA). Most noteworthy: the TRD Rock Warrior. With its 5.7-liter V8, it'll tow 10,000 pounds. Pictured: the 1794 edition.

SHIP SHAPE

SWEDEN PERFECTS THE BESPOKE BOAT

• Still searching for that perfect boat to cruise Cannes? Johan Attvik, owner and CEO of Stockholm-based J Craft, has the hookup. He says he got into boatbuilding because "no one made a boat that matched my desire to have both performance and style." J Craft's Torpedo ($1.2 million, j-craftboats.com) has both in spades, from its Volvo Penta engine capable of 37 knots to the steering wheel, which is modeled after the Ferrari 250 GTO's. Attvik explains: "We've hidden all the modern technology. You feel as if you're in a vintage car or boat from the 1950s or 1960s." Built to be a super-yacht tender (hello, Diddy!), the Torpedo sleeps five and doubles as a cruiser. Attvik offers a slew of custom options, from a remote-controlled gangway to a mahogany deck. He says the company is currently working on "a bespoke pairing of a J Craft Torpedo R and the new Rolls-Royce Phantom Drophead." Who says you can't have it all and then some?—*John Marrin*

SHARP SHOOTERS

REVAMPED DIGITAL CAMERAS GUN FOR YOUR IPHONE

Your trip to Machu Picchu deserves better than an Instagram photo. Forget your cell-phone camera and toss the latest in digital photography into your bag—a mirrorless interchangeable-lens camera. MILCs stay compact by eliminating the mirror in favor of powerful digital sensors. But this isn't your old point-and-shoot. MILCs use interchangeable lenses, sold separately, allowing you to switch between wide angle and superzoom, giving you more freedom and versatility than your iPhone can offer. Sorry, Siri.

Photography by **JOSEPH SHIN**

1.
FUJIFILM X-E1

→ The X-E1 packs a 16.3-megapixel sensor—double the resolution of the camera in the iPhone 5. "Film-simulation mode" will wean you from your Instagram-filter addiction. *($999)*

2.
PENTAX Q10

→ The Q10 is the perfect party camera. Shake reduction, autofocus, group face recognition and 12.4-megapixel resolution help you snap perfect pics no matter your mental state. *($600)*

3.
NIKON 1 J3

→ The J3 is packed with power and speed, including a 14.2-megapixel sensor, crisp image processing and an 80-millisecond release time, fastest of any MILC. *($600, includes 10–30 mm lens)*

4.
SONY ALPHA NEX-6

→ Your Facebook page doesn't have to suffer if you dump your cell phone for a MILC. The NEX-6 snaps 16.1-megapixel photos that can be uploaded to your profile via built-in Wi-Fi. *($850)*

Talking With Frank Bidart

by James Franco

Frank Bidart is one of America's greatest living poets. As author of Music Like Dirt, the only chapbook to be nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and winner of some of poetry's most prestigious awards, he still manages to stand apart from the poetry in-crowd. In this conversation with his friend PLAYBOY *Contributing Editor James Franco, Bidart discusses how poetry works, how much it pays and his forthcoming book of poems, Metaphysical Dog.*

FRANCO: You've been writing poetry for more than four decades. Let's face it: There's no financial gain in poetry—the competition is for critical achievement. How does that affect your life?

BIDART: Financial and critical capital aren't wholly separate in poetry. Famous poets get jobs and tenure. "Howl" supported Allen Ginsberg for life. Poets have two different reputations—what the public thinks and what other poets think. Anne Sexton and Ginsberg weren't respected among poets for much of their careers, despite huge audiences. I've written very little critical prose, for the number of books and amount of approbation I've had, so I've been lucky. People don't know how to judge poems in our culture, so they do so through a poet's prose. That's why people are impressed by Joseph Brodsky, but in his own English translations he's a terrible poet. If I wanted to establish my intelligence like that, I'd write more prose.

FRANCO: *Metaphysical Dog* originally had a different title, right?

BIDART: Yes, *Hunger for the Absolute,* which many people disliked, but it generated things in me. It's this hunger, really, that's at the heart of the book. As I see it, we live in an essentially secular culture, and that's a good thing; religious cultures are much more coercive as to what's acceptable to think and say. But secular culture doesn't satisfy our human desire for meaning. Western culture teaches us to make money and rest everything in our relations with other people, but that doesn't feed our hunger for the absolute. And though religion often answers that hunger in cruel and terrible ways, the questions we want to ask are raised only by religious texts. It's about our constant immersion in the proximate, the incomplete, the flesh and our simultaneous desire for more. It's something I've felt all my life, in a million forms.

FRANCO: In your poem "Queer," as well as throughout the new book, you talk about coming out and the disconnect between one's mind and body. Where does that idea come from?

BIDART: I realized I was gay when I was seven or eight, and for six months I thought, I must be the only person in the world feeling this. Then you learn you're not. But that inner disconnect from pieties about the social world persists. To me, all writing is really about making mind and body one. In this book I strike at that idea in "Writing 'Ellen West,'" which is about wanting to die after my mother died. She became upset after I bought a condo in Cambridge, Massachusetts; she always thought I'd move back to Bakersfield, California and teach at Bakersfield College. I refused, because that was like saying "I want you to die," though she didn't know that. But finally she accepted it, sent me towels, and a year later she died. Of course I thought I'd killed her.

Writing as deeply as I could in the voice of a character who wants to sever that connection between mind and flesh was an exorcism of that part of myself. But I'm still glad I didn't move to Bakersfield. We are on these trajectories that we can't change. She couldn't change her feeling, and I couldn't change mine. I think a limitation of this book is that the crucial relationship in it is with my mother. It's a little sad to come back and obsess about it at the age of 73, but I did.

The last part of that poem is about writing and about art and finding one's voice, all concepts you've explored in the four years we've known each other. You've become this Renaissance man, and it's a brilliant creation—you're accepted now as having a brain, an artist engaged in dialogue with the culture.

FRANCO: Let's talk about that, because you're one of the few people to see the deeper intentions behind even the poppiest things I do. What's your take on that kind of person?

BIDART: There's a tradition in Europe of the intellectual with many capacities, and I see only gain in it. Any resistance you've encountered is because people feel small. And it's that process through which we crystallize ourselves, which for me was this terrible period lasting from the age of eight until graduate school. When I was growing up the implication was that by 21 you had to find yourself and know what you wanted to do for the rest of your life. I wanted to be a famous actor when I was a boy; meeting you reminds me of answering those "Have your picture sent to Hollywood" ads. Then I wanted to be a film director. And at Harvard I didn't say I wanted to be an English professor, I said, "I'm going to be an artist or die, and meanwhile, I'm going to graduate school to read Milton."

So I understand that impulse, to refuse to be seen as only an actor and wanting to be an artist in a much bigger way. There's a line in *Metaphysical Dog:* "Your body will be added to the bodies that piled up make the structures of the world." Nobody wants to be one of those bodies that piled up make the structures of the world. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY RAÚL ALLÉN

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SEXY

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Your Friends Hate Her. Her Friends Hate You. It's a Mess

ELIZABETH BADDELEY

By Lisa Lampanelli

After months of bad first dates, failed pickups and more masturbation than a chimpanzee in a peep booth, you've met that special someone. She's pretty and smart and, better yet, she has sex with you. There's just one problem: Your friends hate her.

Being judged by the friends of your significant other is nothing new. Every couple has people around them who think their relationship is like a romantic movie starring Kate and Leonardo and others who think it needs to be hit with an iceberg and sunk. Finding out that your closest compadres hate your girlfriend or that her friends despise you can mess with your head worse than a trip to Supercuts. You worry that before long you and your gal will be like a couple of Amish who have been shunned from the big barn-raising and that your social calendar will dry up worse than Judge Judy's privates.

Well, never fear, loyal reader! There are ways to make this unwinnable situation at least end in a tie. First of all, don't rush things. Just like your girlfriend wanted you to take it slow when you were first trying to get into her drawers, your friends want you to take it slow when you're trying to cram her into your group. A circle of friends is like a great martini: You need just the right amount of gin, vermouth and olives. If you suddenly throw some flat Mountain Dew into the mix, you'll ruin the whole damn thing. Don't dump her in the middle of a dynamic that took years to build. We all saw how that went with Yoko and the Beatles.

In fact, it's usually a good thing if your friends don't fall in love with your new girl right away. Your friends' opinions are valuable. As friends, their job is to stop you from going down a slippery slope that can not only spoil your Friday night but also ruin the rest of your life.

If you and your new lady have made it to the steady-relationship phase and your friends still show signs of disliking her, you need to set up a casual, get-to-know-her reset. Invite her to hang with you and your boys at a place you all can enjoy, one that will put her in the best light, like a sporting event she actually knows something about—or will at least ask adorably naive questions about to entertain them.

If the boys still aren't warming to her, turn it up a notch. You know the old saying "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach"? Well, the way to get a pal to like your girlfriend is through his crotch. Your chick is bound to have some slutty female friends, so have her bring a few of them along to the next get-together your loser friends are throwing. Seven drunken hand jobs later, your grateful friends will make your gal commissioner of your fantasy league and captain of the softball team.

If, after all this, your buddies still hate your girl, don't despair. Our government believes in the separation of church and state, so you should practice separation of friends and girlfriends. As much as you enjoy a Saturday of brunch and antiquing in a quaint country village, sometimes you need to go barhopping with your buds.

Now, what if the shoe is on the other foot? What if you get the feeling her friends don't like you? You have to nip that right in the bud. The crucial time to win them over is *immediately*. Girls protect their own like a mother grizzly in the wild. If they think their friend is in danger, they'll bare their teeth and maul you like Mama June eating a pulled-pork sandwich. They'll start a nonstop Nancy Grace–style smear campaign against you, turning into private detectives and digging up dirt to discredit you. They'll paint a picture of you uglier than a Honey Boo Boo family portrait. My point is: Get her friends on your side fast.

If you make every effort and it doesn't happen, then you have no choice—they have to go! If not, like a horny cell mate on death row, they'll be a pain in your ass until the end of time. Just give your woman an ultimatum. If she chooses her friends, you can rest assured she wasn't "the one." And if she chooses you, you're in great shape because you just got rid of your worst critics.

In the end, if the person you're with means enough to you, you'll be willing to leave your friends behind, and she'll do the same. On the bright side, this means you can find new friends—maybe even better, funnier and, most important, wealthier friends. Sure, it won't be easy. But about halfway through the ride in your new best friend's stretch limo on the way to your free front-row seats at the U2 concert, you'll realize it was all for the best.

•

Hey, guys, this will be my last column in PLAYBOY for a while. It was a blast writing one of the articles you swear to your woman you buy the magazine for. Thanks for taking time out from staring at superhot naked broads to read me. See you again soon. ■

HAIR TODAY

Is vanity manly? Don't ask the man who's balding

By

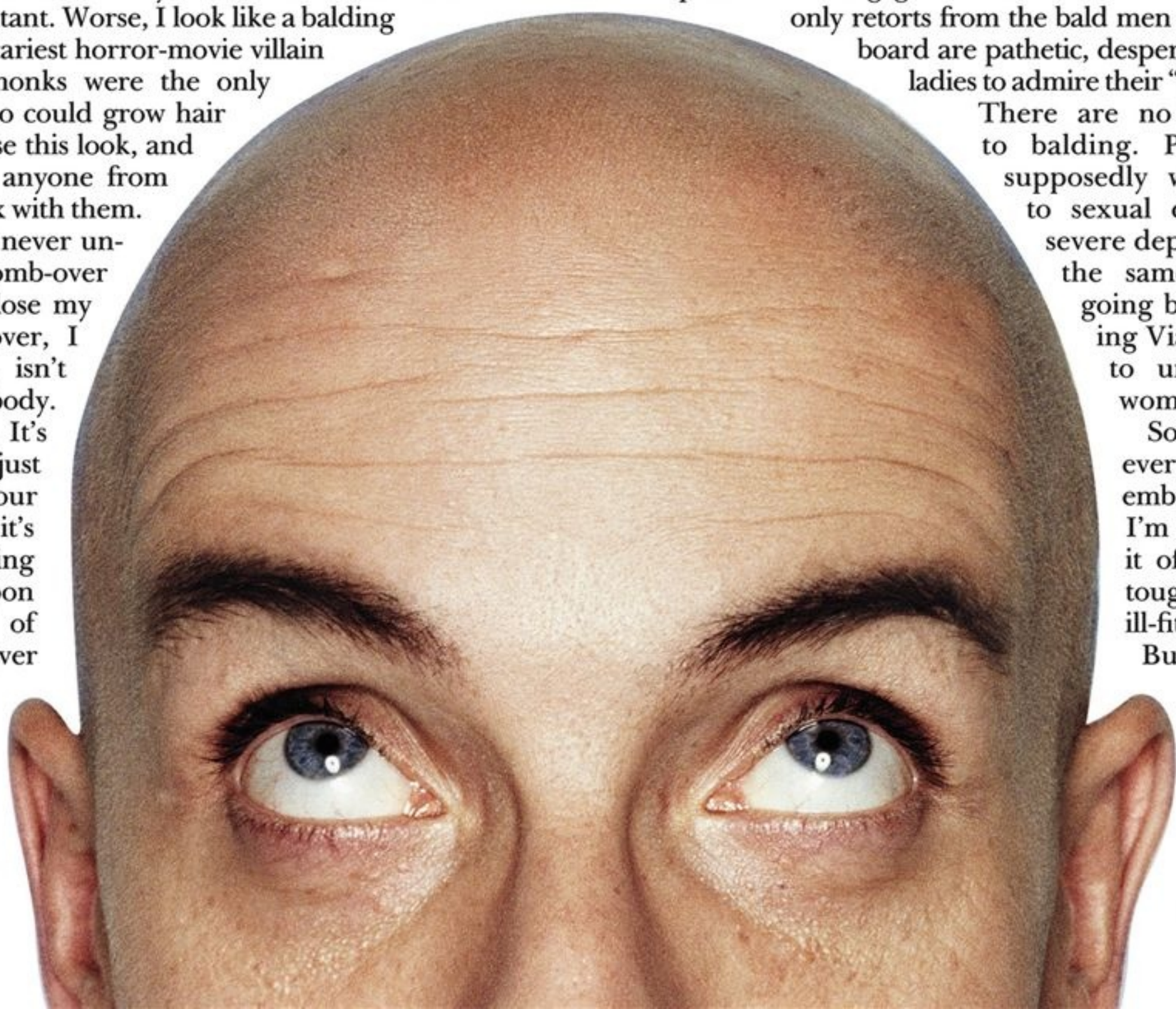
Joel Stein

I am not a vain man. Most of my clothes are more than 10 years old. I get four haircuts a year. There is a tuft of hair on my lower back that would impress the inhabitants of the Shire.

But I do not like balding. And it's not because it makes me look ugly. Or because it makes me look old. It's because it makes me look like I'm dying. Balding has neither the charm of sun-beaten wrinkles nor the wisdom and class of gray hair. It doesn't even have the acceptability of flab, thinning skin or hating dubstep. No, balding is like watching a body decompose in fast-forward. If you want to scare someone in a movie, you create a villain with hair so thin you can see patches of scalp through it. The front of my head looks like it belongs to Gollum or Skeletor. Do you think Freddy Krueger would have worn that hat if he'd had a luxurious mane underneath it? The whole reason Dracula needs the blood of living humans is to push his hairline forward.

True, there is badassery in being fully bald, like Kojak, Bruce Willis, Michael Jordan, extraterrestrials and nearly every UFC fighter. It shows that you have so much testosterone it's too heavy to rise above your waist. It makes you look like a robot or a soldier, like your body is a tool ready to fight or swim, unadorned with girlie accessories like hair. These men make hair seem as if it's solely for twirling, tying with ribbons and hiding nipples in lesser men's magazines than this one.

But I am merely bald-*ing*. In one place—the front of my head. As though I nodded off into a bowl of hair-burning acid. When I shave my head, I don't look cool. I look like an accountant. Worse, I look like a balding accountant—the scariest horror-movie villain of all. Trappist monks were the only men in history who could grow hair but purposely chose this look, and it was to prevent anyone from wanting to have sex with them. Or talk to them. I never understood the comb-over until I started to lose my hair. The comb-over, I now understand, isn't meant to fool anybody. It's not a solution. It's one step up from just drawing lines on your head. And yet, it's better than forcing people to gaze upon exposed tracts of scalp. The comb-over allows everyone you see to laugh at the balding guy instead of recoil from the reminder that we are all going to die really soon.



Not nearly as soon as the guy with the comb-over, but still, soon enough.

Balding is as close as I will ever come to understanding what it's like to be a woman and constantly worrying about how I'm perceived. Balding is my big butt, my wrong mascara, my butchered bangs, my top that doesn't match my skirt, my other things that women are always complaining about that I'm not really listening to. But now I too see pictures of myself and cringe. I worry about choosing the right hair length to hide my imperfections. I drip in Rogaine and sprinkle in fake hair powder. I look in the mirror and see my beauty slipping away. And unlike women, I never had any beauty.

Not long ago men didn't worry about this kind of crap. And we shouldn't, because vanity is not manly. We should care about what we can do, not how we look. But young boys today are pressured to tan, bulk up and pomade their hair to match the caricatures of masculinity they see in video games and animated Disney movies.

Of the many unsuccessful ways I've tried to make myself feel better about this, the worst was perhaps looking for advice about balding at Topix.com, the local-news site co-owned by the major U.S. newspaper chains. The debate there is titled "Bald Men Are So Ugly!" and contains such comments as "They do in fact look like pig fetuses," "I would rather have sex with a 500-pound dude or a guy with a tiny wiener" and "Bald men are ugly as hell, especially with glasses. You can see the extra skin when they turn their necks. The ones I know look like a possum wearing glasses." Sadder still is the fact that the only retorts from the bald men on the discussion board are pathetic, desperate taunts for the ladies to admire their "other bald head."

There are no good solutions to balding. Propecia, which supposedly works, can lead to sexual dysfunction and severe depression—exactly the same symptoms as going bald. It's as if using Viagra caused men to uncontrollably tell women they're fat.

So I'm going to do everything I can to embrace the bald me. I'm going to shave it off, get buff, look tough and dress in ill-fitting Italian suits. But first I'm going to enjoy the last few months I can get away with having hair. Because it's a whole lot easier than working out. ■

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*Organic Category, The Vodka Masters, 2011, Spirits Business

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PLAYBOY ADVISOR

I've always been able to have orgasms clitorally, starting with pool jets, bathtub faucets and now handheld massagers such as the Hitachi Magic Wand. If I leave my panties on while masturbating I can go for hours. The only downside is that I've ruined myself for sex. My clit is so sensitive I don't like to have it rubbed, and my boyfriend is upset. Will it help if I stop using a vibrator? I don't insert dildos during masturbation because that would totally ruin sex for me. I also have intense G-spot orgasms, but he wants to get me off clitorally. He says I'm the first girl he's been with who can climax from her G-spot but not her clit during intercourse. I thought he would be happy that I come three to five times.—D.M., Miami, Florida

Is your boyfriend auditioning for something? He needs to stop focusing on hitting a shot from every spot on the floor and celebrate the fact that he is with a woman who is highly responsive and knows what she likes. You aren't "ruining" sex or damaging your clit by using a vibrator, and a dildo won't do any harm either. Most women can't reach orgasm from a thrusting penis; it doesn't provide enough direct stimulation. If your boyfriend wants to hit your clitoris, he should know he already is. The G-spot is very likely the long arms of the clit that extend several inches into the body. You could invite him to hold a small, less-powerful vibrator against the tip of your clit (the visible glans) during intercourse. Hold it yourself first to show him the movement and pressure you like. Or keep your panties on; he can pull them aside but apply the vibrator through the fabric. Your clit will become less sensitive the more turned on you get.

A reader wrote in March asking about porn in which couples are "enjoying themselves and showing tenderness and affection." He didn't use the term, but he's talking about glamcore. This type of erotica, with its strikingly beautiful performers and high-end production, was popularized in the 1990s by Andrew Blake (whose site remains active at andrewblake.com). His films have more leather and sleaze than you will find at .com sites such as X-Art, Joymii, Femjoy, SexArt and Babes, but they all have model-quality performers and excellent lighting and cinematography. I can't say any of it is "couples" porn, but it is certainly more female-friendly than typical hard-core.—A.N., New York, New York

Is a society progressing or regressing when quality erotica is considered a genre? X-Art, an early example of luxe porn, was founded in 2006 by photographer Brigham Field, who specializes in artistic nudes, and his wife, Colette, who sold real estate before the bottom fell out of the market. Today they have teams shooting in high-def in Madrid, Prague, the Caribbean and exotic Ventura County, California. How do you get the chemistry so often missing in porn? When the performers aren't a couple in real life, it comes from the direction, according to Colette, who says guys who have done porn before often have to be told to slow down and enjoy themselves.

TOMER HANUKA

My new girlfriend has two indoor dogs. I love dogs, but mine have all lived outside. The shedding, the smell, the accidents, the chewing and the destruction are driving me crazy. My friends tell me to suck it up because she's a great catch. Should I follow my girlfriend's lead and put these dogs on a pedestal above human life and my desires?—F.L., San Angelo, Texas

You aren't going to get the dogs outside. Keep in mind they have outlasted all her previous boyfriends. But all is not lost. Trainer Sheryl Matthys, author of Leashes and Lovers, suggests using the dogs to strengthen the human relationship. You can bathe and brush them together and make dates for walks or trips to the park (the chewing and destruction could be a sign the dogs are not getting enough exercise). Sign up for a class together and/or hire a trainer to correct the more annoying issues. Your girlfriend may be a catch, but in this case it's a package deal.

My girlfriend is a singer. The other day she told me we had to break up because the producer of her debut album doesn't want her to date. When I asked for specifics, she said, "He told me if I didn't want to worry about money, I should dump my boyfriend and he would get me on Country Music Television within a year." She claims this is normal, stating, "My life isn't my own right now." What's your take? Is there a standard in the industry that says new artists shouldn't date?—H.E., Nashville, Tennessee

Your girlfriend wants out of the relationship and this is a handy way to avoid taking responsibility. We suspect this mysterious social contract includes a clause that allows her to date producers.

Is there any way to fix my wife's inverted nipples?—F.R., Lincoln, Nebraska

That depends. Do they bother her or you? Outside the relatively few women with inverted nipples who have trouble breast-feeding, there is no medical reason for correction. However, the condition can affect the body image of those who have it, including men. The inversion is caused by connective tissue at the base of the nipples that prevents them from extending outward. Some women correct mild cases with bar piercings. For more pronounced cases, in which the nipple can't be "popped" out by squeezing the areola, a plastic surgeon can cut the tissue below the nipple to release it or make small skin flaps around it, though the latter may leave scars. Doctors typically don't recommend surgery for anyone under 18 and sometimes 25, because the nipple or nipples may emerge in the years after puberty. If a nipple disappears later in life, see a doctor, as spontaneous inversion can be a sign of a rare form of cancer.

A reader asked in January/February about adults-only video games. You neglected to mention *Seduce Me* (seducemegame.com), which combines card play with the challenge of bedding four "seduce-able" characters you meet while exploring a Mediterranean mansion. The graphics are slick and the gameplay is tough and rewarding. We need more people to buy this type of game so developers understand there is an audience and a market. Bring on the high-resolution virtual women.—Z.P., San Diego, California

Thanks for the tip. Many developers seem to be busy with violence, perhaps because you can be challenged easily enough trying to seduce women in the carbon-based world.

I am attracted to one of my professors. So far this hasn't impeded my studies, but I am concerned it will. I am in my early 20s and she is probably in her early 40s. I know she is single and has two children. Every few days I fantasize about asking her out, but that would be stupid. I know the best course of action is to masturbate, but I have done this several times and it hasn't helped clear my head. Any tips on moving past her?—A.G., East Lansing, Michigan

It's not unusual for a student to fancy a prof or vice versa, and in this case we would bet you are far from alone. You could ask her out after the semester ends—it wouldn't be "stupid" but ballsy, because the odds are she'll decline, given her position and the differences in your life experiences. (What would you talk about?) She will most likely remain one of many unrequited fantasies, which always far outnumber those that are realized. And what's wrong with keeping it a fantasy?

Because I'm a mountain biker and weight lifter, I often get sports massages. My therapist digs deep and hard, which I love. However, I recently got a beautiful dragon tattoo that slithers from my elbow to my wrist. I'm afraid to have it massaged for fear of damaging it. Should that be a concern?—F.M., Boston, Massachusetts

You're right to be cautious. "Leave the tattoo alone for at least six to eight weeks," advises Dr. David Ores, a heavily inked general practitioner in New York who offers laser tattoo removal. "That will allow the ink to set into the correct layer of your skin. Ink particles outside that layer will be removed by your immune cells. This is why tattoos become clearer and sharper after a few weeks."

I am surprised by the results of the study you mention in the March issue that found marijuana dulls male sexual response. My ex-wife and I had some of the best sex while high, which usually happened three or four times a month. We also had sex five or six times a week without it, and that was great too. Were we an exception because of our high sex drive?—G.K., Cottonwood, Arizona

As with any drug, your results may vary. It sounds as though you were two horny people who smoked pot, rather than two people who got horny smoking pot. For most people, weed (like alcohol) lowers inhibitions while dulling the senses. For men at least this means you may not perform as well as when sober—though everyone keeps trying. It can also inhibit your judgment about unprotected sex.

This month I am graduating with a bachelor's degree in marine engineering. I can't decide whether to stay in school or look for a job. I've been told by relatives I should not "overqualify" myself with a master's degree. What does the Advisor think?—R.G., Boca Raton, Florida

In a job market in which you need a college degree to be hired as a file clerk, it's hard to believe you can be overqualified for anything. Why not investigate a hybrid solution? Look for a graduate assistant position or a job with an employer who will contribute to your tuition. A Compdata survey of more than 4,500 company benefit plans found 57 percent include tuition reimbursement, up from 35 percent just four years ago.

I discovered a thick, coarse hair in my beard. It was around the same size as a pencil lead. I was horrified yet intrigued. Is this common? None of my friends knew what I was talking about. What causes this?—D.H., Jackson, Mississippi

Known as pili multigemini, it is caused by a rogue hair follicle, usually near the chin but sometimes on the scalp, from which the inner membranes of two or three hairs emerge wrapped together in the same outer membrane. In one case reported in the British Journal of Dermatology, doctors used a laser to destroy the multigeminate hair follicles on the face of a 33-year-old because they repeatedly became inflamed. Other than that, the only way to prevent such hairs is to have the follicles removed by way of a "two-millimeter punch biopsy excision," according to a dermatologist at the Cleveland Clinic. We say keep plucking.

My wife and I have had the same phenomenon happen twice: After she has an orgasm her vagina becomes "prickly" (for lack of a better word) and causes slight abrasions on my penis. The change seems to come very suddenly. Any ideas?—S.J., Austin, Texas

It's not teeth, if that's what you're thinking. A prickly vagina can be a sign of a yeast infection or lack of lubrication, but if either or both were the case, she'd feel discomfort long before she came. The "abrasions" are a mystery; it could be irritation caused by lack of lubrication combined with vigorous thrusting. Our prescription is to add lube and see if the feeling persists. Of course, "add lube" is our prescription for almost everything. If you're already using lube, try a new one to eliminate the possibility that it has caused some kind of reaction. Let us know how it goes.

On our vacation to San Diego, my wife and I will stay at a hotel that has a $45 daily valet fee. We will come and go to sightsee and eat. Should I tip the valet every time I pick up and drop off? Also, what is an appropriate tip for a valet?—R.T., Tucson, Arizona

Give $2 or $3 each time you pick up the car. In the end, it won't total more than $20 or $30, and you'll spend that opening two bottles of water in your room. If you don't have singles, it's okay to ask for change.

I watch online porn with my husband because I think it is a good way to let him know I am not a prude. However, I can't help but suspect he is cheating because photos of women who say they live nearby keep popping up with invitations for webcam chats. Do I have a reason to feel betrayed?—H.R., Dallas, Texas

Not at all. The pop-up girls are ubiquitous come-ons to entice guys to click through and pay for a remote interaction. Your husband didn't invite them; they appear in a separate window, with sound, anytime you visit many adult websites. They're easy enough to eliminate by turning on the pop-up blocker in your browser. Your husband may have taken part in a chat with one of these "local" women (which means nothing more than that they also live on planet Earth), which might constitute cheating. At the very least it's odd, given his wife is willing to provide a live show. You don't need to prove you aren't a prude; your husband needs to prove he's not a slacker and that his partner is being satisfied. And if you're truly watching porn together, you should have a chance to pick the scenes or films—or pop-up girls—as well.

I have been married to a great guy for five years. However, I recently found his stash of high-heel shoes (which are higher than mine), pantyhose, wigs and makeup. Weird, right? He told me they belonged to an old girlfriend, even though the sizes are large and she wasn't. Then I noticed he has been shaving his legs. Finally, I found some of my dresses torn and not hung the way I left them. He made up a story about how they had fallen and gotten torn when he rehung them. I'm worried the man I love may want to be a woman or at least dress in my stuff. I don't think I can handle this. What should I do?—K.B., Newark, New Jersey

He doesn't want to be a woman; he just wants to occasionally dress like one. And like most cross-dressers, he's straight. But your husband is desperate to give up his secret, which is why he's become so sloppy about hiding what is likely a desire he's nursed since he was a teen. Not every woman can handle this kind of revelation, and it has destroyed marriages. But plenty of wives are able to accommodate their husbands' desires. You'll find support groups at crossdresserswives.com and tri-ess.org. The cross-dressing is harmless (except to your wardrobe), but your husband's feeling that he needs to lie to you is not. Relieve him of that burden. And tell him to stay out of your closet.

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereos and sports cars to dating dilemmas, taste and etiquette—will be personally answered if the writer includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The most interesting, pertinent questions will be presented in these pages. Write the Playboy Advisor, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or e-mail advisor@playboy.com. For updates, follow @playboyadvisor on Twitter.

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DEATH BY DRONE

The White House is using drones to kill American citizens. Where's the due process?

BY MELBA NEWSOME

In 2008 Barack Obama campaigned to end Bush-era policies that, he said, created a false choice between our safety and our ideals. Now that the war in Iraq is over and the war in Afghanistan is winding down, there is no indication the liberal constitutional-law professor will become a peacenik president—or even pull back on some of his more aggressive counterterrorism measures.

For the first time in more than 40 years, Democrats hold the advantage over Republicans on national security. Obama has achieved that distinction by escalating the use of drones and ordering the execution of suspected terrorists, including American citizens. Those policies have led Sarah Khan to sue the Department of Defense and the CIA for the September 30, 2011 death of her 25-year-old son, Samir.

Saudi native Samir Khan became a naturalized citizen after he moved as a child to Queens with his family. By most accounts he was a normal teen until the summer of 2001, when he attended a weeklong summer camp sponsored by the fundamentalist but nonviolent Islamic Organization of North America. The experience turned the religiously indifferent teen into a zealot. A few months later the September 11 attacks made him a radical. By the time his family relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina three years later, Khan had morphed into a jihadist committed to waging war against those he considered enemies of Islam.

In October 2009 Samir Khan left Charlotte, North Carolina for Yemen, ostensibly to teach English.

Khan holed up in his parents' north Charlotte basement, publishing anti-American and pro–Al Qaeda screeds. As his writings became more popular, he attracted the attention of federal authorities yet miraculously never landed on the no-fly list. In October 2009 he left Charlotte for Yemen, ostensibly to teach English. Once there, Khan fell off the radar. He resurfaced during the summer of 2010 as editor of *Inspire,* an online magazine that sought to recruit American Muslims to join the anti-U.S. jihad.

A year later Khan was killed by a U.S. drone strike on his convoy about 90 miles east of the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. Khan's family took the government to task in a written statement that read in part, "Our late son Samir Khan never broke any law and was never implicated in any crime. The Fifth Amendment states no citizen shall be 'deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law,' yet our government assassinated two of its citizens. Was this style of execution the only solution? Why

READER RESPONSE

BACK TO THE BURBS

James Howard Kunstler, Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and many other social critics have been pointing out for years that gas prices and the lack of social connectedness leave many Americans hungering for a more satisfying way of life in urban centers ("The Suburbs Are Dead," January/February). After living outside Philadelphia for 10 years, I took the plunge and moved to the city center, driven by romantic visions of walking everywhere and having a bit more excitement. Instead I found congested and dirty streets, charmless concrete garages and parking lots on virtually every block, the rancid stench of garbage and bus exhaust, a cacophony of horns, car alarms

and snorting garbage trucks at all hours, feral mice in my apartment, a four percent city wage tax and a soul-crushing absence of trees, grass, open spaces and tranquility. Needless to say, I got the hell out.

Drew Cutler
Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JUSTIN PAGE

couldn't there have been a capture and trial? Where is the justice?"

The radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, marked for death by the administration, is the other American referred to in the statement. It isn't clear if Khan was a target or collateral damage.

Al-Awlaki was born in New Mexico but spent nearly a dozen years in his ancestral home of Yemen before returning to the U.S. to attend Colorado State University. After the 2001 attacks, he moved to the United Kingdom and eventually made his way back to Yemen, where he became involved with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The government claims Al-Awlaki

ANWAR AL-AWLAKI IN VIRGINIA IN 2001: BORN IN NEW MEXICO, HE BECAME AN ALLY OF AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

instructed Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the so-called underwear bomber, to blow up a plane flying to Detroit in 2009, and inspired the actions of Army major Nidal Hasan, who is being court-martialed for killing 13 people at Fort Hood, Texas in a 2009 rampage. Despite being linked to these planned attacks, Al-Awlaki was never charged with a crime. Two weeks after his death, his 16-year-old son, Abdulrahman, also an American citizen, was killed in a drone strike aimed at Al Qaeda.

Hundreds of suspected terrorists were rounded up after September 11, 2001 and imprisoned in Guantánamo Bay, only to be transferred or released later in a tacit acknowledgment that they weren't terrorists. But when a suspected terrorist is killed, there is no do-over.

Al-Awlaki and Khan made no secret of their allegiance to Al Qaeda and their desire to wreak havoc. Khan's articles in *Inspire* included "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom" and "I Am Proud to Be a Traitor to America." Al-Awlaki's blog, Facebook page and many YouTube videos were testaments to his terrorism bona fides. But the issue is not guilt or innocence. Were these American citizens accorded due process under the law?

"The Constitution ordinarily guarantees American citizens that they will not be deprived of life without due process of law," says Jameel Jaffer, an ACLU lawyer representing the families of Khan and Al-Awlaki. "The administration has claimed the authority to carry out the targeted killing of anyone, including any American thought to be engaged in terrorism. It's impossible to reconcile that position with the constitutional provision."

The issue is not guilt or innocence. Were these American citizens accorded due process under the law?

"The Constitution guarantees due process, not judicial process," Attorney General Eric Holder said during a speech at Northwestern University's law school in March 2012. "Due process and judicial process are not one and the same, particularly when it comes to national security."

Holder argues that following 9/11, Congress authorized the president "to protect the nation from any imminent threat of violent attack." Because Al Qaeda operates around the world, Holder said, the rules of conventional warfare no longer apply. "The president may use force abroad against a senior operational leader of a foreign terrorist organization with which the United States is at war—even if that individual happens to be a U.S. citizen," Holder said.

Candidate Barack Obama promised to chart a different course. Once in office, he set out to improve relations with the Muslim world, repair America's image abroad and renounce the cowboy diplomacy that had defined foreign policy under President George W. Bush. Obama banned torture and extraordinary rendition and tried to make good on his promise to close Guantánamo and try detainees in federal civilian courts. But Congress blocked him. However, when it comes to drone strikes, the president has outpaced Bush, expanding the program, which had previously focused only on Pakistan, to include Yemen, Afghanistan and Somalia.

The Bush administration was criticized for warrantless wiretapping and indefinite detentions without charge or trial, but Obama has been given a pass for his aggressive measures. The same Democrats who railed against the prior

YOU CAN RUN

We use drones against American citizens, on American soil

On June 23, 2011, Rodney Brossart refused to return three cows and three calves that had wandered onto his Lakota, North Dakota farm. A 16-hour SWAT team standoff followed, and the Grand Forks police department called in an unmanned aerial vehicle to pinpoint Brossart's location on his ranch. Brossart thus made history as the first American arrested with the aid of a drone.

Do drones now pose a risk to individual Americans? The Federal Aviation Administration predicts 30,000 could take flight within our borders by 2020. At a fraction of the cost of a helicopter, drones could prove a boon for various public and private applications. A push for new airspace regulation has ensued. But "demanding the FAA address privacy implications," writes lawyer Tim Adelman, "is like asking a car mechanic to perform open-heart surgery."

Eleven states will tackle homegrown drone measures this year. Last term, members of Congress introduced two bills regarding drone regulation. It's doubtful the FAA can juggle safety and privacy oversight, and it remains to be seen how effective federal regulation can be. Unmanned aircraft: coming soon to a police force near you. ■

administration's policies have remained silent on Obama's decision to ramp up drone strikes and use targeted killings.

Republicans have a different conundrum. Given their hawkishness and persistent claims of Obama's weakness on war and terrorism, they can hardly complain about his overzealousness in prosecuting the war against Al Qaeda.

But the rumblings of discontent over this administration's blank check for war are growing louder. The wrongful-death lawsuits are the most prominent example, but the U.S. also stands alone on the drone issue. In predominantly Muslim nations, American antiterrorism efforts are widely unpopular, and in 17 of 20 countries, more than half disapprove of the drone attacks.

"I used to joke, 'If they can hold you indefinitely without judicial review, why couldn't the administration also carry out targeted killings without judicial review?'" says Jaffer. "Now that's no longer a rhetorical device. It's reality. It's hard to imagine any more extreme claim of authority than the power to order the killing of American citizens without judicial process."

Obama defended his policy in a September 5, 2012 interview with CNN. "I think there's no doubt that when an American has made a decision to affiliate with Al Qaeda and target fellow Americans, there is a legal justification for us to try to stop them from carrying out plots," he said. "It's very important for the president and the entire culture of our national security team to continually ask tough questions. Are we doing the right thing? Are we abiding by rule of law? Are we abiding by due process?"

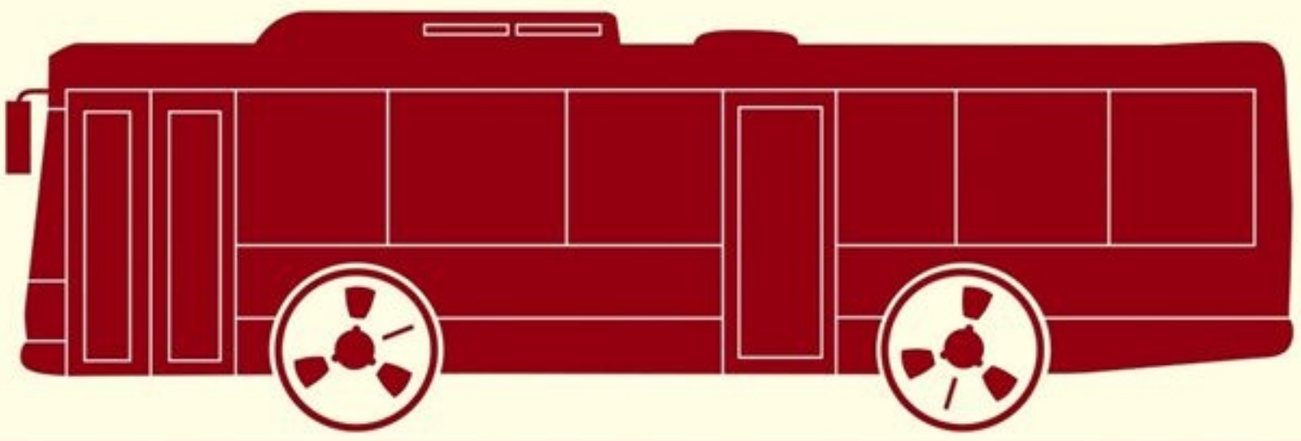
The U.S. established precedent for taking out an enemy leader 70 years ago with the targeted killing of Japanese naval commander Isoroku Yamamoto, who planned and executed the attack on Pearl Harbor. When Yamamoto's plane was tracked to an island in the South Pacific, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the order to shoot it down.

Jaffer says that while there is no moral distinction between ordering the killing of a U.S. citizen and a noncitizen, there is a legal distinction. "Americans plainly have rights protected by the Constitution, including the right not to be deprived of your rights without due process of law," he says. "The law generally requires that there be an imminent threat and that the use of lethal force be a last resort. Was Al-Awlaki an imminent threat or simply an ongoing threat?"

Democrats who railed against the prior administration remain silent on Obama's decisions.

More than a year before his son's death, Al-Awlaki's father, Nasser, asked a judge to outline the circumstances under which targeted killing could be authorized. The case was dismissed because Nasser did not have standing to sue on behalf of his adult son. Nasser is now suing the government for wrongful death on behalf of his son's estate.

"If this case can't be heard, then courts are saying the political branches can decide which Americans are associated with terrorism and can be killed—and these decisions can be done in secret," says Jaffer. "That's an astonishing and dangerous proposition and an unchecked



IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD

If you ride the bus in Baltimore, Maryland or Columbus, Ohio, you'll have to be careful what you say—your conversations are being recorded. In San Francisco, transit officials recently approved a plan to install audio-enabled surveillance systems on city buses and trolley cars. Any of these audio communications—private conversations among law-abiding passengers, in other words—can be monitored without a search warrant or other court supervision. Authorities contend that such monitoring is necessary to help keep the public safe. So much for your expectations of privacy. ■

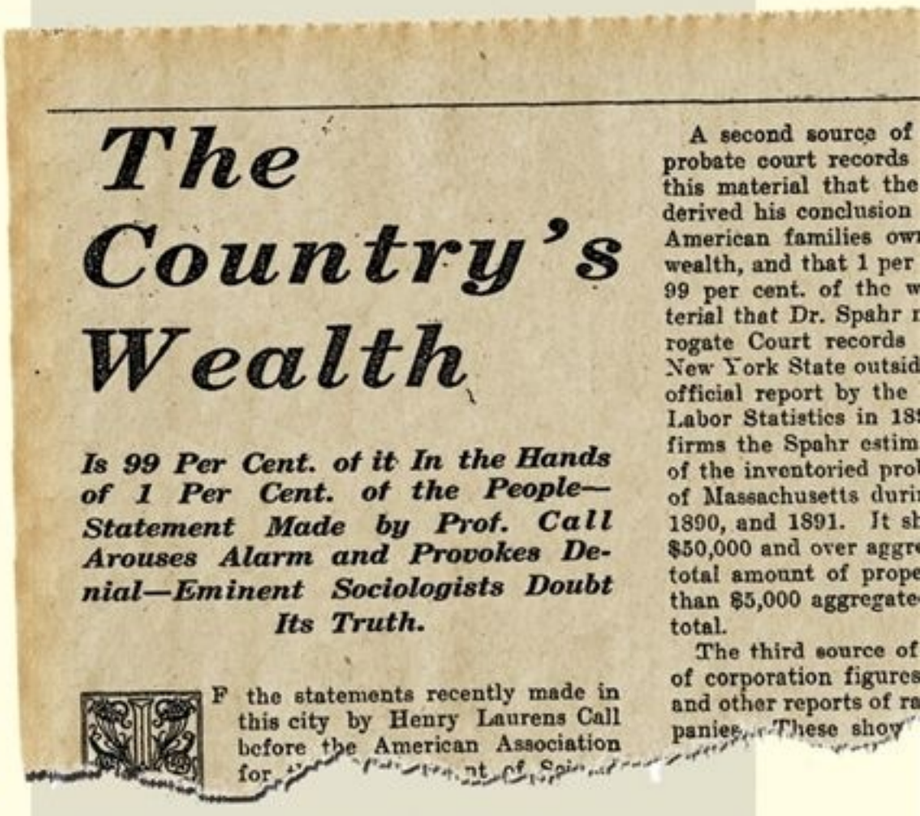
READER RESPONSE

Are you kidding about the suburbs being a plot against the races? I hadn't realized you were a full-blown leftist rag until I read that. I just wish there were a suburb for the suburbs.

Tim Driscoll
via e-mail

TAX THE RICH

As we continue to fight undeclared wars to support the demands of the military-industrial complex, we need to tax the rich at the same rates we did during World War I and World War II, i.e., 80 or 90 percent. It has only been since the maximum rate was lowered during the 1970s that the middle



The Country's Wealth

Is 99 Per Cent. of it In the Hands of 1 Per Cent. of the People—Statement Made by Prof. Call Arouses Alarm and Provokes Denial—Eminent Sociologists Doubt Its Truth.

IF the statements recently made in this city by Henry Laurens Call before the American Association for

A second source of probate court records this material that the derived his conclusion American families ow wealth, and that 1 per 99 per cent. of the w terial that Dr. Spahr r rogate Court records New York State outsid official report by the Labor Statistics in 18 firms the Spahr estim of the inventoried pro of Massachusetts duri 1890, and 1891. It sh $50,000 and over aggr total amount of prope than $5,000 aggregate total.

The third source of of corporation figures and other reports of ra panies. These show

class has been bearing the brunt. In fact, historically the decline in the maximum rate always seems to precede the decline of the middle-incomers. Imagine how the nation would benefit if we could raise taxes on the wealthy to 90 percent and shift the emphasis from military spending to infrastructure. By the way, concern about the concentration of wealth at the top is nothing new: In January 1907 *The New York Times*, reporting on a speech given by economist Henry Laurens Call, ran this headline: THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH: IS 99 PERCENT OF IT IN THE HANDS OF 1 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE—STATEMENT MADE BY PROF. CALL AROUSES ALARM AND PROVOKES DENIAL—EMINENT SOCIOLOGISTS DOUBT ITS TRUTH. Who ended up being right?

Frederick Hart
Orlando, Florida

investment of power to a president."

In an effort to take responsibility for each death, Obama is said to decide personally who is targeted for killing and approve every major drone strike in Yemen and Somalia. But should any president be granted such power, regardless of his judicious consideration? Any power given to Obama will be used by presidents who follow him in office. Would liberals be quiet if a President Romney made these calls?

That possibility obviously concerned the president. In the weeks before the election, the administration developed rules for the targeted killing of terrorists by unmanned drones so that a new president would inherit clear standards and procedures.

But even Obama acknowledged that drone strikes are not a long-term solution to terrorism. "Our most powerful tool over the long term to reduce the terrorist threat is to live up to our values and to be able to shape public opinion—not just here but around the world—that senseless violence is not a way to resolve political differences," he said, sounding more like candidate Obama than President Obama.

We won't know how a different president would exercise such authority. But we do know that President Obama is unlikely to change course during his second term. ■

READER RESPONSE

POT DOESN'T KILL...

I am a 20-year subscriber who feels compelled to respond to the reader who argued in March that lives will be ruined should marijuana be legalized. I smoke pot, but I am able to buy it only illegally. If I felt compelled to "advance to harder drugs," my dealer would be happy to provide cocaine or heroin. Since nothing is stopping me from using narcotics now, why would it suddenly happen if weed were legal? Asserting that pot smokers are a step away from lifelong misery is insulting and shows an utter ignorance of the drug. Legalizing pot could save lives: If it weren't a crime to possess or purchase, more people might sit home and get stoned rather than drive drunk on (legal) booze.

Jason Knapp
Columbia, South Carolina

...BUT BULLETS DO

In "Ammo Nation" (March) you make the same mistake virtually all journalists make when writing about firearms. What you call a bullet is actually a cartridge. A bullet is the projectile part of the cartridge. The other parts are the case (or brass), primer and powder.

Bill Hamilton
Hurricane, Utah

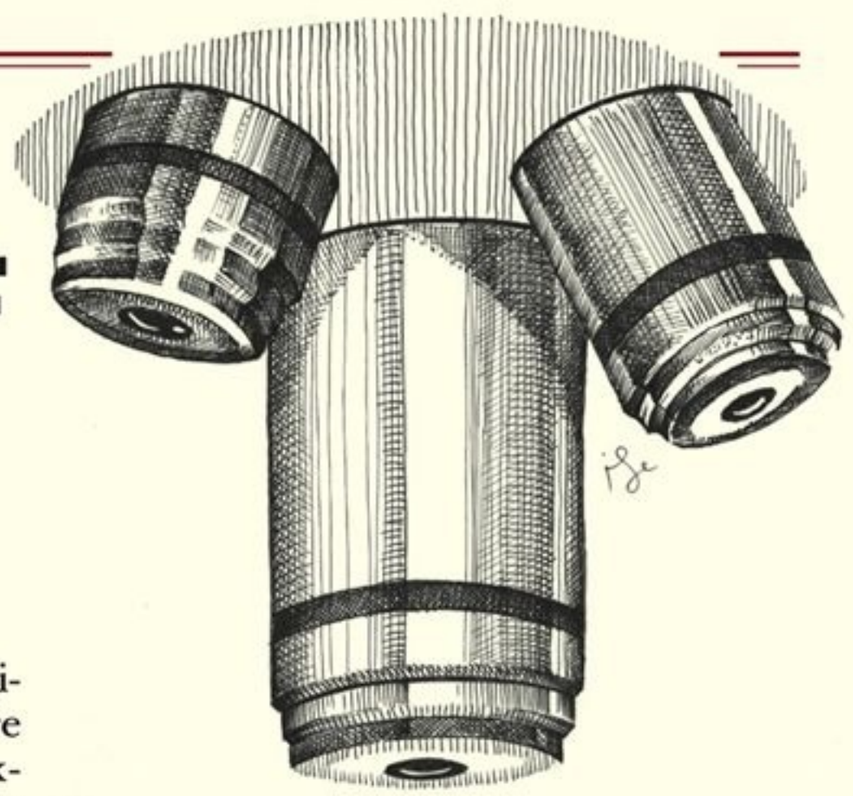
You're technically correct, but "Guns don't kill people, cartridges do" (as Daniel Patrick Moynihan might have said) doesn't have the same ring to it.

E-mail letters@playboy.com. Or write 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210.

CHECK YOURSELF

Is your most sensitive information safe?

BY TYLER TRYKOWSKI



Two years ago users of the digital fitness tracker Fitbit were surprised to find their sexual activity, as recorded by the device, appearing in Google search results. "Way to go, Jeff," tweeted columnist Andy Baio, linking to one high-performing example. The records were promptly removed, but Fitbit faced few repercussions for the leak.

How secure is the data we volunteer to tech companies? There's a new movement called life tracking, and its proponents—who record everything from their moods to the quality of their sexual encounters—are about to find out. Using a variety of digital devices, companies like Fitbit store and analyze data about life trackers' bodies while promising to protect the information. The companies claim they can help people lose weight, increase productivity and even predict illness. Patientslikeme.com and similar websites use the data to gain insight into conditions including kidney disease and asthma. But insurance companies and employers can use this information against you.

In 2012 more than 1.7 million U.S. medical records were reported as leaked across 223 breaches.

Lawmakers are years behind technologies that collect data on the scale of life tracking, says Rainey Reitman, activism director for the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act protects health information but only with health care providers and insurers," says Reitman. "Consumer devices aren't covered." She adds that state laws and privacy policies vary widely. A Carnegie Mellon University study found it would take a person 244 hours, or roughly 40 minutes per day, to read every privacy policy encountered in a year. And when companies go bankrupt or merge, data can be wielded in ways users never intended.

Data this sensitive have a tendency to leak, no matter how they are regulated: In 2012 more than 1.7 million U.S. medical records were reported as leaked across 223 breaches. And those were just typical medical files, less detailed than the data logged by life trackers. What happens when the movement goes mainstream?

"Companies that produce life-tracking devices are going to need a self-policing

association to avoid regulatory crackdowns later," says author Tim Ferriss, who meticulously tracked his fitness for his book *The 4-Hour Body*. He adds that danger lies in losing sight of your goals. "Data are just numbers," he says, "but information is what you can apply to your own life. And there's a big difference between tools that provide data and ones that provide information."

Such technologies can change lives, but the companies that make them can't be trusted with our most personal information. Regulators won't protect you, and nobody has time to read the policies that apply to the data they generate. Fancy pedometers may look cool, but buyer beware. ■

Our Corporate Masters

DRILL, BABY, DRILL

Is ExxonMobil the most successful corporation in American history?

BY BRIAN COOK

In the 1950s, Exxon's profits matched those of industrial titans such as IBM, General Motors and U.S. Steel. And while those companies have either disappeared or become also-rans in today's multinational marketplace, Exxon remains at the top, regularly setting records for quarterly profits.

ExxonMobil has donated hundreds of millions of dollars to women's education, malaria reduction and a center for alternative energy at Stanford University. So why is the company the leading culprit in speeding civilization toward ecological ruin? The charge doesn't necessarily stem from the company's business model: It efficiently extracts fossil fuels. The blame for a world that runs on oil can hardly be placed on one company. In fact, as Steve Coll details in his masterful book *Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power*, ever since the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill off the Alaskan coast, the company has focused on crafting and adhering to rigorous safety protocols.

But Exxon has also been an industry leader in funding obfuscation and the promulgation of horseshit when it comes to climate change. Much of this effort has come from the American Petroleum Institute, an industry trade group, and the Global Climate Coalition, a multi-industry effort that sought to convince the public that those who favor 1997's Kyoto Protocol—which aimed to (slightly) reduce carbon emissions—"appear to be out of touch with reality."

Exxon didn't stop there. After Greenpeace targeted Exxon in direct action and public-relations campaigns, the environmental group found itself under IRS scrutiny. The tax audit—which Greenpeace passed—had been instigated at the behest of a small nonprofit called Public Interest Watch. When Greenpeace investigated the group, it learned that in one year almost 97 percent of Public Interest Watch's revenue came from a single entity. Guess who.

At the same time Exxon was attacking the notion that a scientific consensus exists on climate change, its own geologists were studying how global warming could be exploited for drilling. "Don't believe for a minute that ExxonMobil doesn't think climate change is real," one anonymous ex-manager told Coll. "They were using climate change as a source of insight into exploration."

It's enough to make us think that "Exxon Hates Your Children"—a motto used by activists critical of the company—may not be hyperbole. ■

PACKING HEAT: WHERE GUNS ARE GROUNDED

Last year TSA agents confiscated more than 1,500 guns at U.S. airports—the highest number since 2001, when the agency was founded. Florida and Texas led the nation (the figures for select airports are shown below). Dallas's Love Field was the only major airport where agents found more than seven guns per million passengers boarding an aircraft. Three out of four guns seized at U.S. airports are loaded. ■

Sources: Skift, TSA, Medill National Security Zone

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: J.J. ABRAMS

A candid conversation with Hollywood's geek king about rebooting Star Trek and Star Wars, profiting off paranoia and capturing distracted fans

Nobody in Hollywood today is as cool for so many uncool reasons as J.J. Abrams. A film and TV producer, screenwriter, director, designer, editor, composer and all-around geek god, Abrams is the bespectacled creative titan behind projects most likely to have fans sleeping outside box-office windows in itchy space costumes.

Star Trek Into Darkness, his second big-screen contribution to the unstoppable sci-fi franchise, arrives this month with a cast so young and sexy their parents barely remember the launch of the original 1966 series. A sequel to the 2009 prequel set when Kirk and Spock were still new to the Enterprise, this one brings the crew back to Earth to confront a force as devastating as a website full of Trek plot spoilers. A third feature film is already planned.

In the meantime, Abrams has another to-do item: reboot Star Wars. He will direct Star Wars: Episode VII, the first in a new series of Star Wars films to come from Lucasfilm, which Disney bought from George Lucas last year for $4.05 billion. At first the Twitterverse cried out that it was too much for one mortal to oversee both galaxies, but the blowback ended fast. Having helmed Trek, Mission: Impossible III and TV sensations including Lost, Fringe, Revolution and Alias, Abrams is probably better suited than anyone to juggle both phaser and lightsaber.

Jeffrey Jacob "J.J." Abrams was born June 27, 1966 in New York City but grew up on the glitzier side of Los Angeles, where both parents produced TV movies. At the age of 13, young J.J.—"Only my father's mother called me Jeffrey," he says—first operated a Super 8 camera and by the age of 16 earned the notice of Steven Spielberg, whose office asked Abrams to edit Super 8 movies Spielberg had made when he was a teenager. (Many years later they collaborated on an action adventure called Super 8.) Abrams sold his first script in college and later earned his cred writing Regarding Henry and Forever Young. Felicity made Abrams a TV giant, and the script for Armageddon made him rich; they also show an unusual range and a talent for crossing genres.

PLAYBOY *Contributing Editor* ***David Hochman,*** *who last interviewed Fox News anchor Chris Wallace for the magazine, was the first journalist to sit down with Abrams in the aftermath of the Star Wars announcement. The two chatted all afternoon in a Santa Monica office complex as decidedly geek-forward as Abrams himself. Says Hochman, "J.J. maintains a shrine of vintage knickknacks from entertainment classics like Twilight Zone, Planet of the Apes, Close Encounters and the original Star Trek and Star Wars. I'm starting to think the J.J. Abrams collectibles might be worth even more one day."*

PLAYBOY: Let's begin with *Star Trek*. How the hell can this franchise still go where no man has gone before?

ABRAMS: Well, I haven't seen every episode of every version of every *Star Trek* series, but I'm sure there are many more places to go. What's great about doing another origin story is that it's all about anticipating the *Star Trek* world we know is to come. You can play with who Spock and Kirk and the crew of the *Enterprise* were before they were Spock and Kirk and the crew of the *Enterprise*. It's a kind of tease.

PLAYBOY: Considering what a thrill ride the first movie was, *Into Darkness* sounds like a bit of a downer.

ABRAMS: The first film was very much about these disparate orphans coming together and starting a family. The next step has to be about going deeper and, yes, as the title indicates, getting a little more intense. We're testing these characters in ways they deserve to be tested: Kirk being cocky to a fault, Spock being so Vulcan that it raises the question of

"The pencil-necked geek guys with pocket protectors are the people who invented the iPod and everything else everyone carries with them all the time. There's a general understanding that smartphones didn't come from jocks."

"Star Trek has to be sexy. That's in keeping with the original spirit of the series. Part of the fun was playing with the idea that Uhura and Spock were a couple. And it's always fun playing the womanizing card with Kirk."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

"It's an age of insane distraction. The fact that kids are supposed to do their algebra homework on the same device that is a portal to every possible piece of entertainment—comedy and music and porn—is just bizarre."

how he can possibly be a friend or lover when he's that unemotional.

I learned so much doing the first *Star Trek* movie. I'd never done any kind of space adventure before or anything on that scale. We knew the second one had to be bigger and not just for bigger's sake. It was where the story was taking us. We got really cool glimpses of the *Enterprise* in the first movie. This time we get to see areas of the ship nobody's seen before. And the villain is more complex now. In our first film Eric Bana plays a wonderfully angry Romulan dude, pissed off and full of vengeance. In this one, the bad guy is still brutal and fierce, but he's got a much more interesting and active story. We have to grapple with many layers of his character. He's essentially a space terrorist, and Benedict Cumberbatch, whom people know from BBC's *Sherlock,* is fucking kickass in the role. Kirk and the rest of the crew are figuring out how the hell to get an upper hand with this guy. The darkness is real in this movie, and it's incredibly challenging and terrifying, and it can certainly be lethal. You need that edge, partly because *Star Trek* has been so relentlessly parodied over the years.

PLAYBOY: It's hard to be a Trekkie.

ABRAMS: It can be. The key in everything we did was to embrace the spirit with which *Star Trek* was approached in the 1960s. So the design of the props, the locations and certainly the characters themselves couldn't be mockeries or impersonations but had to be as deeply felt as Leonard Nimoy felt and applied to his interpretation of the character in his time. Zachary Quinto, who plays Spock, had to do his own version of that, just as we never wanted Chris Pine to do a Shatner parody. Audiences pick up on that stuff. Not only are we post–*Star Trek* the series and movies, but we're post–*Galaxy Quest,* post–*Saturday Night Live* spoofs. We were coming at this post–*Trek* satire, so we needed to be earnest in the right places and funny in the right places or people would have made fun of us.

PLAYBOY: One of the things people make fun of is the sex scenes. Is there any interspecies sex?

ABRAMS: *Star Trek* has to be sexy. That's in keeping with the original spirit of the series. In the 1960s they were limited because of the time, but so much was insinuated. Part of the fun of our first movie was playing with the idea that Uhura and Spock were a couple. This movie takes that further and asks how that's possible. Why would she be interested in that kind of guy, and why would she put up with him? It's obvious what he would like about her. I mean, it's fucking Zoë Saldana.

And it's always fun playing the womanizing card with Kirk and seeing him in bed with girls who might not be completely human—you know, green skin or whatever. Nobody's going to force Kirk to be a romantic and settle down. That would feel forced and silly. Kirk's a player. We like him that way.

We also have Alice Eve joining us; she's an incredibly wonderful, versatile actress and definitely in the sexy category. She's a great complement to Uhura. Hey, it wouldn't be *Star Trek* if there weren't some hot young actors, women and men, in various moments of either undress or flirtation.

PLAYBOY: Did Leonard Nimoy or William Shatner drop by the set?

ABRAMS: Leonard did. I love him; he's always a joy. The cast and crew got to applaud him and give a fraction of the thanks he deserves. He's just an absolute gentleman. Shatner? [*sighs*] I haven't spoken with him in a long time, but I did read something where he gave me a fantastic underhanded compliment. Something like our movie was a fun action ride and maybe one day it'll have heart. A great compliment only to pull the rug out in a way that only Shatner can do. I adore him.

PLAYBOY: It's hard to explain the enduring love for this franchise that has been around almost 50 years. Is it true you screened an early cut of *Into Darkness* for a terminally ill *Trek* fan whose dying wish was to see it?

The darkness is real in Star Trek Into Darkness, and it can be lethal. You need that edge, partly because Star Trek has been so relentlessly parodied over the years.

ABRAMS: Yes. That was such a tragic moment and so sad. It's incredibly touching that the stuff we happen to be working on means enough to people that in those extreme, ultimate moments a movie like ours would even be a consideration. But it reminds you that these entertainments, these characters can and do touch people on the deepest level. Somehow their existence is made to make some sense or given an order they might not otherwise feel. You certainly don't make movies for people who are sick or in real trouble. You just make movies. But people take these stories and characters to heart and believe they matter on some larger level.

PLAYBOY: Nothing matters more to moviegoers than the stories and characters from *Star Wars.* In your wildest, geekiest fantasies, did you ever imagine yourself helming the two biggest sci-fi franchises in the universe?

ABRAMS: It is preposterous. Ridiculous. Completely insane. It really is.

PLAYBOY: *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* are church and state in Hollywood. Can you really be loyal to both? *Star Trek* fans cried out on Twitter that you were cheating on them.

ABRAMS: I mean, I get it. The worlds are vastly different. Honestly, that was why I passed on *Star Wars* to begin with. I couldn't imagine doing both. But when I said that my loyalty was to *Star Trek* I was literally working on finishing this cut. I couldn't even entertain another thought. It was like being on the most beautiful beach in the world and someone saying, "There's this amazing mountain over here. Come take a look." I couldn't balance the two, so I passed on *Star Wars.*

PLAYBOY: What happened between saying no and saying yes?

ABRAMS: It was a wild time. I was near the light at the end of the tunnel with my work on *Star Trek.* I felt I needed a bit of a breather, actually. But then Kathleen Kennedy [the new Lucasfilm head who oversees *Star Wars*] called again. I've known her for years. We had a great conversation, and the idea of working with her on this suddenly went from being theoretical and easy to deny to being a real, tangible, thrilling possibility. In the end it was my wife, Katie, who said if it was something that really interested me, I had to consider it.

PLAYBOY: There's much to discuss, such as the rumors of old cast members returning.

ABRAMS: [*Smiles*]

PLAYBOY: Will this be a distinct new trilogy?

ABRAMS: [*Smiles*]

PLAYBOY: Can you do away with Jar Jar Binks?

ABRAMS: You won't like this answer, but it's so early it would be insane to discuss details or get into plot points about what this unfilmed movie will be. And I'm not going to give my opinion on the original movies or characters.

PLAYBOY: But as a lifelong *Star Wars* fan, surely you have broad ideas about what needs to happen going forward. Three quarters of planet Earth came down on George Lucas for practically ruining *Star Wars* in *Episode I.* The *Star Wars* universe revolted.

ABRAMS: Here's the thing. I try to approach a project from what it's asking. What does it need to be? What is it demanding? With *Star Wars,* one has to take into account what has preceded it, what worked, what didn't. There are cautionary tales for anything you take on that has a legacy—things you look at and think, I want to avoid this or that, or I want to do more of something. But even that feels like an outside-in approach, and it's not how I work. For me, the key is when you have a script; it's telling you what it wants to be.

PLAYBOY: *Star Wars* needs to look different from *Star Trek,* certainly.

ABRAMS: As with anything, because these are very different worlds, they shouldn't

feel the same aesthetically. They can't. You're right. But again, I don't apply aesthetics first and fit a movie into that aesthetic. If I had come into *Star Trek* with those eyes, I would probably have been paralyzed. The advantage here is that we still have George Lucas with us to go to and ask questions and get his feedback on things, which I certainly will do. With *Star Trek* it was harder because I wasn't a *Star Trek* fan; I didn't have the same emotional feeling, and I didn't have Gene Roddenberry to go to. But I came to understand the world of *Star Trek,* and I appreciated what fans felt and believed about this universe and this franchise.

PLAYBOY: As recently as last fall you said that directing a new *Star Wars* comes with a burden of "almost fatal sacrilege." Do you feel that?

ABRAMS: I meant if I viewed this from a fan's point of view—and no one's a bigger *Star Wars* fan than I am—or from a legacy standpoint, it would scare the hell out of me. But instead of trying to climb this mountain in one giant leap, I'm just enjoying the opportunity and looking to the people I'm working with. I've known Kathy for years. I've worked with the screenwriter, Michael Arndt, for a long time. I've known George for a number of years and he's now a friend. Even if this wasn't *Star Wars,* I'd be enormously fortunate to work with them.

PLAYBOY: How much of your personal vision can you put on this?

ABRAMS: For me to talk to you about what the big themes or ideas are before they exist is disingenuous, but naturally I have a big say in how this gets put together. When I get involved with something, I own it and carry the responsibility of the job.

PLAYBOY: *Star Wars, Star Trek, Mission: Impossible*—you're the king of the reboot. Don't you want to make something original again?

ABRAMS: I have to say, as someone who almost to a point of embarrassment has associated himself with a number of projects that preexisted, I'm not looking to do another reboot. There's one project, which I can't talk about yet, that we are going to do in the TV space that is an exception. But the truth is, one of the reasons I at first easily said no to the notion of *Star Wars* was the thought that I had to do something original again. I mean, it's what I've done on TV with *Felicity, Alias, Lost, Fringe* and everything else. It's the thing I was looking forward to doing next. The best-laid plans, you can say—but when something like *Star Wars* comes along, you either roll with it or not.

PLAYBOY: What's the spirit of an original project you'd want to do?

ABRAMS: I'm open. My favorite movie is *The Philadelphia Story.* I love Hitchcock movies. I'm a huge fan of Spielberg, and I love David Cronenberg. I'm all over the place in terms of stuff I like. There's an amazing book called *Let the Great World Spin* that we've been developing with Colum McCann, the writer, and I'd love to do that. Not because of anything other than I feel the characters are beautiful and alive and have incredible heart and soul. But I'm open to anything.

PLAYBOY: How do you juggle your various responsibilities? In addition to the movies, you're executive producer on *Revolution* and *Person of Interest* on TV. Earlier this year you wrapped *Fringe* after five seasons. You have a wife and three kids. You write music, you design things, you've given a TED talk. Presumably you eat and sleep too.

ABRAMS: I like to work hard, and I surround myself with people who are better at what they do than I am at what I do. And as much as we say yes to many things, we say no to almost everything. We're very selective. We know how to get things done. For *Star Trek* it was Damon Lindelof, Bryan Burk, Alex Kurtzman, Bob Orci and me. With Jonathan Nolan on *Person of Interest,* he was someone we were dying to work with. He came in with a great idea, but he had never done TV before. He and [co–executive producer] Greg Plageman have been running that show beautifully. Eric Kripke is running *Revolution.* We had a team of talented producers on *Fringe.* So it's not like I'm in the room and running operations on these shows.

With Star Wars, one has to take into account what has preceded it, what worked, what didn't. There are cautionary tales for anything you take on that has a legacy.

PLAYBOY: So in the final days of *Fringe* you weren't bounding into the writers' room, yelling, "We have to explain who those creepy people chasing Peter were in the first season!"

ABRAMS: By the time we got to the fifth season my involvement was zero. It's like with *Lost.* Damon and Carlton Cuse were running that show spectacularly and deserved to end the series as they saw fit. If I saw something really objectionable, I might jump in, but they knew what they were doing.

PLAYBOY: Were you satisfied with how *Fringe* ended? There were certain questions that never got answered, such as, if the Observers were wiped out, why was Peter still in our universe?

ABRAMS: Right. [*Fringe* co–executive producer] Joel Wyman and I had long discussions about points like that. But I don't know of any movie, including *Back to the Future,* despite the clarity of that film, that deals with time travel or, in this case, an alternate universe and time travel, that doesn't have issues with such paradoxes. And given the enormity of the issues *Fringe* was dealing with, it was an amazing finale. After everything that transpired in that last season, for Peter to swoop up Etta at the end and have that moment with her and see that couple with their kid, there was a kind of profundity and emotional satisfaction. Walter's sacrifice allowed for his son's and Olivia's ultimate happiness to come true. That was a far more meaningful ending than explaining how the Observers work into that time frame. What exactly happened with amber, and does it make sense? These are questions you could ask, but I would hope the audience is smart enough to figure things out for themselves and allow for unexplainable situations.

PLAYBOY: Your biggest TV hit, *Lost,* got some groans at the end for leaving things open-ended. People are still arguing over it. What was the "sideways" world? Were the passengers of Oceanic Flight 815 actually dead the whole time? Looking back, do you think *Lost* fans deserved a less ambiguous ending?

ABRAMS: No. I loved the ending. I thought it definitely provided an emotional conclusion to that show. There may have been specific technical things people felt they wanted to understand, like what the island was exactly or why it was. But it's like the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction.* If you show me what's in there, I promise you it will disappoint me.

PLAYBOY: It's like the mysterious pendant in *Revolution* that's the key to explaining what disabled electricity on the planet.

ABRAMS: Yes. If you're looking for the thing that ultimately explains what the answer is, or, let's say, what God is, no matter what physical manifestation you see or hear, you'll never be satisfied. Could our shows answer every question people have? Maybe, but I'm guessing the answers won't be as satisfying as trying to figure out the answers.

PLAYBOY: Do you actually believe there are alternate universes?

ABRAMS: I'm definitely fascinated by the possibility. Whether it's alternate universes or time travel, the idea that reality isn't exactly what we assume it is is the sort of primordial ooze of any great out-there story, certainly in sci-fi and arguably in non-sci-fi as well. The idea that just around the corner something unbelievable might exist, that behind that door might be something you could never imagine. I've always been obsessed with the feeling that there's another level of understanding in the world, whether it's something as fantastical and fanciful as *The Wizard of Oz,* as dark and freaky as *The Ring* or as wild and thrilling as *The Matrix.* The idea that this world we know

isn't just this world we know but that a package might arrive at your door or a phone call might come in, and suddenly you're in a portal to a different realm.

PLAYBOY: Paranoia also figures into your work. Do you really think the government or corporations are watching us in ways we should be concerned about?

ABRAMS: Oh yeah, for sure. I'm not saying in this instant they are. But I defy anyone who lives in any size metropolis to travel 20 minutes and not see a bunch of surveillance cameras. Those cameras aren't there to ignore you; they're there to see you, and all that information is going into banks of digital recorders and oftentimes facial-recognition software. We're all being tracked. When you have a fairly average life and you're not doing anything particularly interesting or illegal or wrong, why should that bother you? Well, it means we're all being recorded, our activities are being watched, and our privacy is being compromised. I think that's something to be aware of, at the very least. It's the premise behind *Person of Interest,* which is a show about being observed. On the positive side, the heroes of that show are good guys, since it's also a show about wish fulfillment.

PLAYBOY: You're certainly cautious about sharing information. It's not just *Star Wars* you don't want to talk about. You famously withhold almost all spoiler information on your projects. What prompted that?

ABRAMS: That's a paranoia I've developed since the *Superman* script I wrote years ago was reviewed online. I always had a sense of how I enjoyed entertainment, which was to sit down in front of a TV or inside a darkened movie theater and be surprised by everything that happened on the screen. It used to be that to get a spoiler you had to really seek it out. Now you have to work to avoid it. If something happens on *Downton Abbey* or *Homeland,* you practically can't speak to another human being or you'll hear what happened. The truth is, people don't like spoilers. When we were doing *Lost,* fans would ask me what was going to happen. Before I could even open my mouth, often they would say, "Don't tell me." Would I have wanted to hear from Rod Serling what was going to happen on each episode of *The Twilight Zone*? No way! The buy-in with entertainment like that—or with any great thrill—is that you're going on an adventure and you don't know where you're heading. That's the stuff of show-business magic.

PLAYBOY: You grew up in a show-business family. How did it affect you to know from a young age that the magic of showbiz was fake?

ABRAMS: It wasn't fake to me. It was real seeing Hollywood people do what they do. My father worked as a producer at Paramount. I'd go to his office and look at the call sheets of everything that was shooting on the lot. This was back in the day when shooting in Los Angeles was a given, so there would be a dozen things filming. It was the time of *Happy Days, Laverne & Shirley* and *Mork & Mindy.* I'll never forget seeing Ron Howard, Henry Winkler, Tom Bosley and the whole cast of *Happy Days* with their scripts and Garry Marshall on the floor, rehearsing an episode. I felt a desperate, deep hunger to be on the floor with them. I was so jealous that their job was to put on a little play and figure it out.

PLAYBOY: What were some moments that left you saying, "Never meet your heroes"?

ABRAMS: Seeing Robin Williams being completely off-color freaked me out. It's funny when you're an adult, but it's creepy and weird when you're 12 and he's dressed like Mork. Even weirder was going to the set of *Eight Is Enough.* I really liked that show, but I remember walking onto the set—again, I was probably 11 or 12—and seeing the mom, Betty Buckley, aggressively negotiating some deal for a commercial with her agent. That was strange. Then I went onto the bedroom set and there was Willie Aames lying in his *Eight Is Enough* bed, passed out facedown from, I'm sure, a night of insane partying. Then Adam Rich came skateboarding by and I heard people in the crew swearing at him under their breath after he passed. That was ugly.

I defy anyone who lives in any size metropolis to travel 20 minutes and not see a bunch of surveillance cameras. Those cameras aren't there to ignore you.

My point is, there was a sense of creepy dysfunction that was the opposite of what you'd see on TV. So I knew it wasn't all roses, but I also saw how fucking cool it was. If I were better at math, I might have gone to medical school. If I were a better artist or architect, I could have gone in those directions. But I knew from a young age I couldn't do anything else than be involved in this crazy world I'm in.

PLAYBOY: What happens when you're working on a production and someone is crazier than you thought they were in the casting session?

ABRAMS: That has happened on a couple of occasions. If it's someone who's in three scenes in a movie and they're doing a good job but they're nuts, you kind of think, Let's just ride it out and we'll deal with it. If they're signed on for six episodes of a show and they're making people on the crew cry, you have to address it and deal with it, but it has happened only a couple of times. For the most part you do your due diligence and get to know who you're working with before the crazy happens.

PLAYBOY: What about Tom Cruise? What was your experience with him on *Mission: Impossible III*?

ABRAMS: Here's what happened on *Mission.* Before I started, I called Cameron Crowe, whom I know, and asked him his advice, since he'd made two movies with Tom. He just said, "Brother, you are going to be spoiled." I was like, "All right," not quite knowing what he meant. I now know he was right. Tom is the hardest-working, most focused, generous, passionate-about-the-form collaborator I could imagine. He's someone who gave me my first shot directing a movie. No one would have done that but him. It was a huge first movie to do, but I was never scared. I was always excited about it because I felt everything I had been working on was sort of preparing me for that. And Tom made it an amazing experience. I was a first-time feature director, and before we started shooting Tom said, "I'm your actor; you're the director."

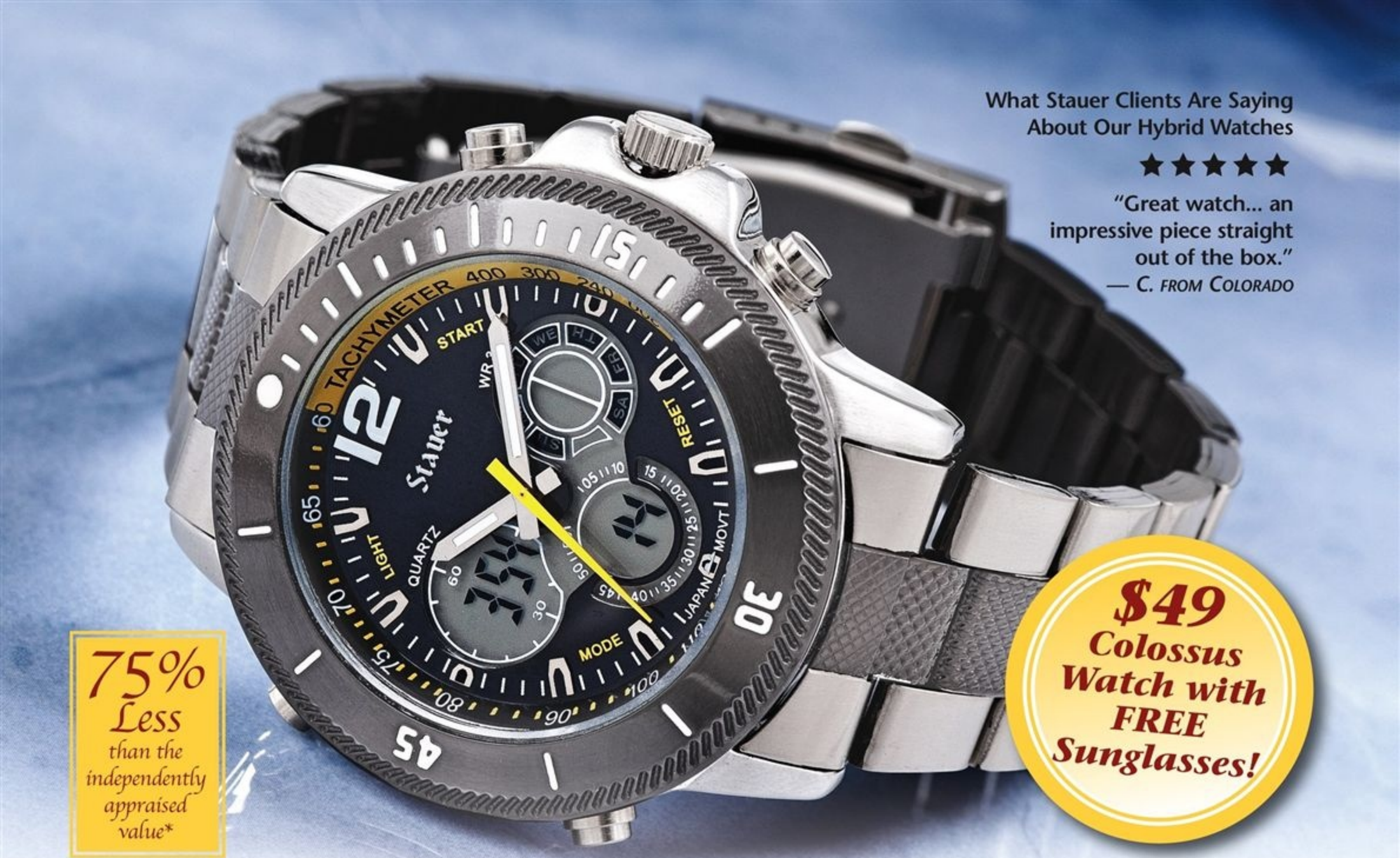
I remember being warned by a number of very experienced people in the business that a producer-star with a first-time director gets really ugly, so get ready. I'll tell you that there was not a day on that movie when Tom was not supportive, encouraging, collaborative, excited. He never mandated anything. He never insisted on things going a certain way. There was nothing I ever asked him to do that he wouldn't do. There were things I asked him *not* to do because he was so willing to put himself physically in danger. I would be like, "There's not a fucking chance you're going through that window. If you get cut...." But he was always about the better idea.

PLAYBOY: Then what are we to make of the Scientology Tom or the jumping-on-Oprah's-couch Tom or the psychiatrists-are-evil Tom?

ABRAMS: He has never in any way mandated or tried to push any of that. You heard stories that there were Scientology tents and things on *War of the Worlds.* That never existed in my experience with him, ever. All I will say is that he's got a huge heart, and he's a generous and good guy.

PLAYBOY: What about Michael Bay? You co-wrote the screenplay for *Armageddon.* What are your memories of that experience?

ABRAMS: I know Michael's a guy who can be abusive and crazy and all kinds of stuff. I remember hearing things like "Oh my God, he's so intimidating." But when I was driving over to meet him for the first time, someone called and said, "He went to Crossroads," which is a private school down the street *(continued on page 132)*



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The Gringo

Richardson

he mirror crashes to the floor and Rigo is in the doorway with his nine in his hand—*We're at war! We're at war!*

The Gringo bolts from his bed. He's been in the cartel seven months, a college-educated American kid from the suburbs of Portland with a shaved head and the massive shoulders of the offensive tackle he once was. It started out pure fun, easy money, gorgeous women and the camaraderie of soldiers. They called him La Flama Blanca, the white flame, which somehow inspired a series of *Talladega Nights* jokes. *We know how*

to shake and bake Flama Blanca style! And man, did they party. But lately the Gringo's been getting paranoid. That's why he put the mirror against his door, the only alarm system that still works after Rigo freaked out and smashed all the alarms, thinking they were spy cameras.

We're at war! Rigo shouts again.

As usual, Rigo's out of his mind on coke and ecstasy and massive quantities of booze. He's 30, skinny and good-looking, with the vagued-out sweetness of someone nursing many inner wounds. His uncle gave him a job cleaning meth when he was 13. When he was 15 he watched his grandfather stab a man to death. When he was 18 he stabbed a man and then spent five years in prison. In the past few months he's become the Gringo's best friend.

Calm down, the Gringo says. *Tell me what happened.*

What happened is Rigo went to the projects to score coke and some guy sold him a $10 bag that seemed light, so they had words and Rigo punched him in the face. According to the narco code, the guy is going to have to come back hard. The alternatives are ostracism or death.

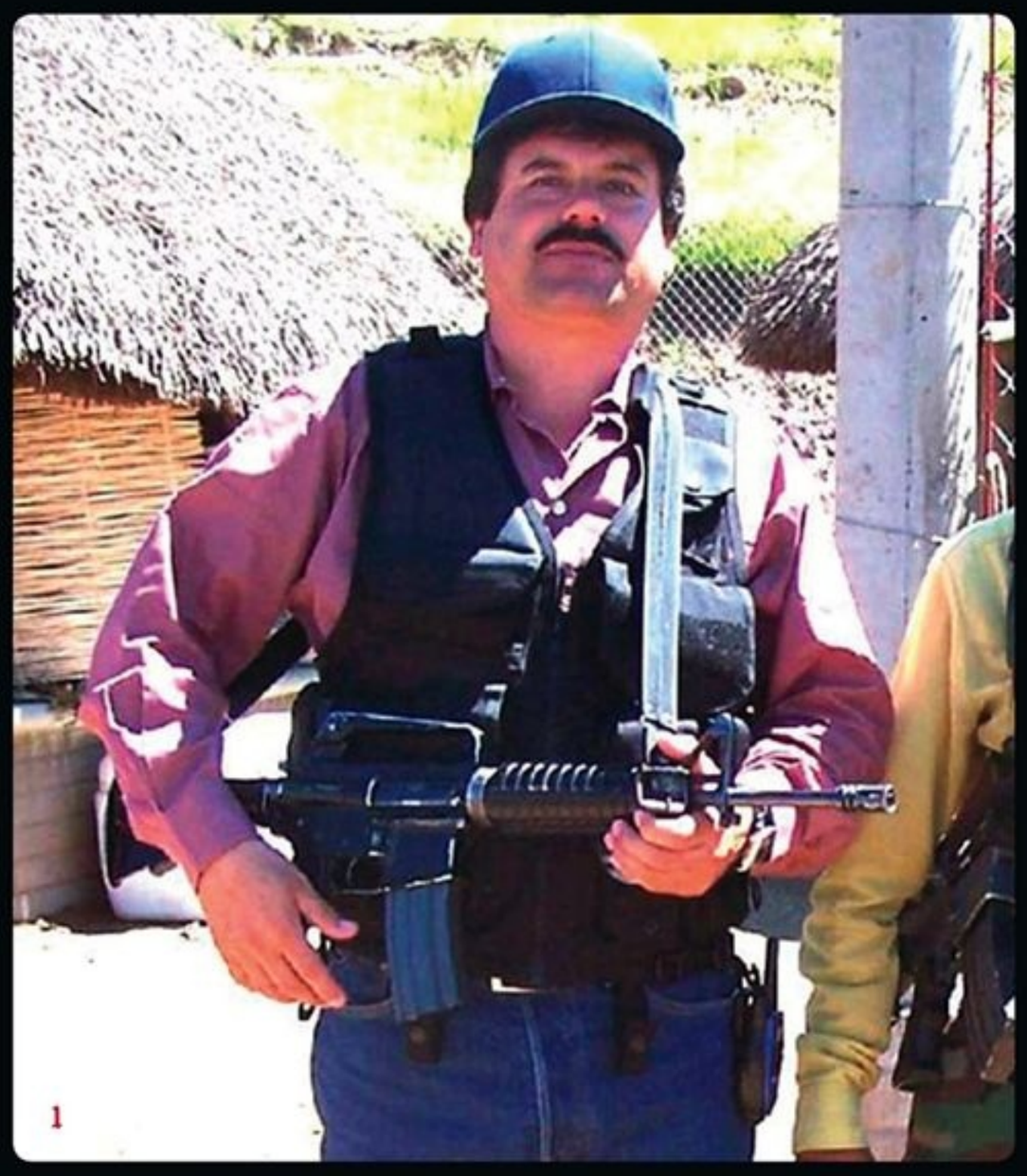
"We killed his whole family, just walked into the house and started shooting."

They're coming for us, Rigo says. *We're fucking at war right now.*

Then Rigo sits down on his bed and starts to pass out. Thinking there's a gang of killers on the way, the Gringo says, *Motherfucker, what the fuck?*

Rigo wakes up for a second. *I just need some milk and cookies, Mom.*

After that, nothing will rouse him. So the Gringo takes his gun and stands watch all night, *(continued on page 116)*



1. Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, head of the Sinaloa cartel, has been ranked by *Forbes* as one of the richest men in the world. El Gringo Loco was running drugs for El Chapo's cartel. 2. Soldiers on the hunt for cartel leaders stumbled on this stash—$26 million in cash. 3. Marines stand guard over a seized shipment of cocaine in Manzanillo, a Pacific coastal town where El Gringo Loco worked the streets and clubs, dealing. 4. More than 55,000 people have been killed in drug violence in Mexico since 2006. Would El Gringo Loco be added to the list?

"I'm so glad that our door is open to the girl next door."

This Side

I'm a slave to my emotions, to my likes, to my hatred of boredom, to most of my desires," F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. He might have been speaking for any of us. What would Fitzgerald have made of 25-year-old model Monika Pietrasinska of Lublin, Poland? We'd guess he'd make a tall glass of scotch and soda and add a garnish of his own tears. Go ahead, pour yourself one. We photographed Monika on the white sand beaches of a Caribbean isle—our own version of paradise. Step into the photograph for a moment—onto that beach and into the unreal. Ask Monika about her great love, and she says, "All my friends." Her favorite thing to do in her spare time? "I make others happy." On hatred? "That's a big word!" she says. "Someone I might hate doesn't exist." Clearly she is delightful, inside and out. Just the kind of woman with whom you'd want to spend a day in paradise, as a matter of fact. As Fitzgerald wrote at the tender age of 23, "Beauty means the scent of roses and then the death of roses." Let's add Monika to the list, shall we, Scottie?

# of Paradise

Eden awaits on a tropical isle with Polish model Monika Pietrasinska

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MARZENA BUKOWSKA-FILUK

Fiction by

Chuck Palahniuk

His special talent made him popular
with a certain kind of girl

Cannibal

This is him. This is how he goes, the captain of the Red Team. He's all, "Listen up." He's desperate because they're still choosing sides. Because all the good picks are already taken, the captain says, "We'll make you a deal."

He folds his arms across his chest, and the captain of the Red Team yells, "We'll take the fag, the four-eyes and the spic—if you'll take Cannibal."

Because phys ed is almost over, the Blue Team confers, squeaking the toes of their court shoes against the gym floor. Their captain yells back, "We'll take the fag and the four-eyes, the spic, the Jew, the cripple, the gimp and the retard—if you'll take Cannibal." *(continued on page 122)*

Illustration by Marco Wagner

20Q

BY **ERIC SPITZNAGEL**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GAVIN BOND**

Peter Dink

The badass *Game of Thrones* star talks about the perils of his stature and tells what happens when fans stampede

lage

Q1

PLAYBOY: You play Tyrion Lannister, a major character on the HBO series *Game of Thrones,* a show that kills off major characters all the time. Are you worried about your job?

DINKLAGE: I don't think Tyrion is going anywhere. He once said that he'd like to die "in my own bed, at the age of 80, with a belly full of wine and a girl's mouth around my cock." I like to think that was a premonition. That's how he's going to go. He's a survivor. But you're right; it's amazing how many major characters get killed this season. People who have read all the George R.R. Martin books that the show is based on tell me Tyrion's still alive. We're only on season three and there are five books. Tyrion hasn't been killed yet, so I feel pretty secure.

Q2

PLAYBOY: Do you feel like a badass when you're swinging around a sword, or is it just awkward and weird?

DINKLAGE: There's a scene in the show when I chop a man's leg off from behind. The gentleman was probably about 70 years old. They filmed him from the back, so you don't see how old he is. Also he's an amputee. He had one leg, so basically I just knocked out the fake leg. I had a big dull sword, and I knocked a wooden leg off an amputee who was 70 years old. So to answer your question, no, I don't feel like a badass. The fight scenes are all a big lie. The whole time, you're trying not to get hit in the eye with a sword, and you wish you had on a welding helmet.

Q3

PLAYBOY: When you won an Emmy, the announcer said that *Game of Thrones* is "filmed on location in Awesome Land." Tell us more about this magical place called Awesome Land.

DINKLAGE: It's in Northern Ireland. And Croatia, Morocco and Iceland, but mostly Northern Ireland. We shoot in a studio in Ireland where the *Titanic* was built. Not the movie but the ship that sank. That can't be a good omen, can it? I love being over there. It's like getting paid to be a tourist. Not that we have a choice. You can't shoot a show like this in New Jersey.

"They'll say, 'Oh, he's sexy,' but women still go for guys who are six-foot-two."

Q4

PLAYBOY: There's a video on YouTube called "Peter Dinklage Gets So Much Pussy" in which two guys talk about how much you've been getting laid since *Game of Thrones*. They estimate your sexual activity has increased 600 percent in the past few years. Does that sound about right?

DINKLAGE: It depends. By "pussy" do they mean actual pussy? Or is it a metaphor, like for gardening? Because if that's the case, then yes, I've been doing a lot of gardening lately. If they mean sex, they might be getting me confused with somebody else. But if pussy means wearing old-man sweaters and watering my herb garden, then absolutely, I'm getting so much pussy.

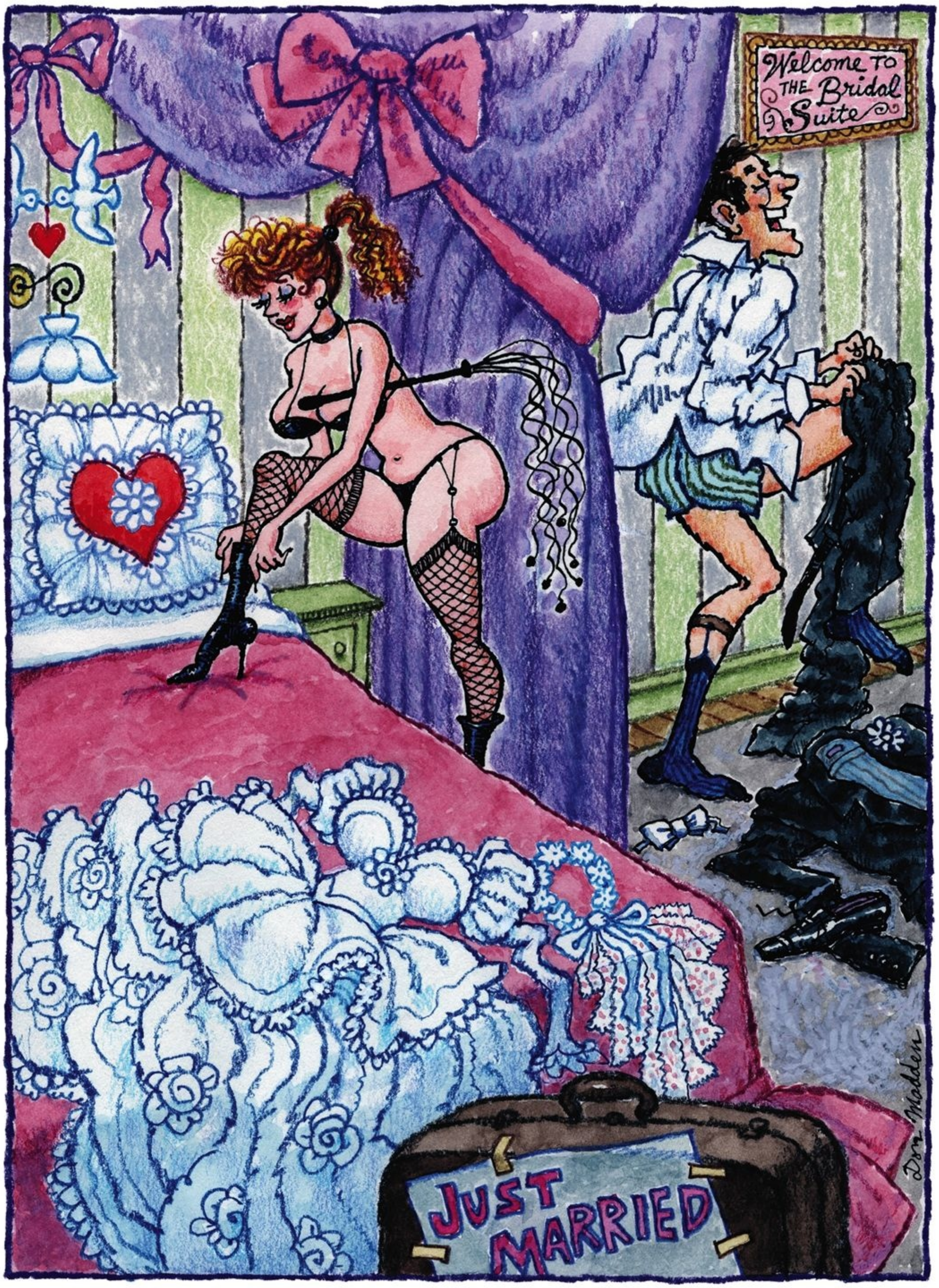
Q5

PLAYBOY: You are aware that you're a sex symbol, right? Some might even call you a DwILF.

DINKLAGE: DwILF, as in Dwarf I'd Like to Fuck? That's very clever. Honestly, I think there's an irony in all of this. I take it with a grain of salt. They'll say, "Oh, he's sexy," but women still go for guys who are six-foot-two. It's nice that people are thinking outside the box, but I don't believe any of it for a minute.

Q6

PLAYBOY: We notice you have a few scars. Do any of them have interesting stories? *(continued on page 131)*



"Get ready for the thrill of your life, honey!"

SALE OF THE CENTURY

MATTHEW COX WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST REAL ESTATE FRAUDSTER—UNTIL THE BUBBLE BURST. WITH THE LAW ON HIS TAIL, NO MATTER HOW MUCH PLASTIC SURGERY HE HAD TO HIDE HIS IDENTITY, HE COULDN'T ESCAPE HIS OWN FACE IN THE MIRROR

BY DAVID KUSHNER

Matthew Cox always wanted to make his father proud, but he didn't think it would land him on the top of the Secret Service's most wanted list. His scam was real estate fraud, and he was the best. For five years during the peak of the housing boom, he crisscrossed the southern United States, hustling home owners and banks for as much as $26 million—with the help of a revolving cast of female accomplices.

ILLUSTRATION BY THE HEADS OF STATE

Weaned on heist films, he went to cinematic lengths to succeed, becoming a master forger, assuming dozens of identities and spending tens of thousands of dollars on plastic surgery to alter his appearance. It's one of the craziest crime sprees in recent memory. It also offers new insight into the mortgage crisis from which we're still reeling. Cox surfed the tidal wave of greed in the housing industry right up until it crashed, helping lead America into one of its worst recessions ever. He epitomized just how reckless lending practices were *(continued on page 124)*

ГУЛЯЙ ПО ЛЕСУ

RETRO RENOVATION

*WE ENLISTED LIFESTYLE GURU **TAAVO SOMER** TO TRANSFORM AN AVERAGE URBAN LOFT INTO A VINTAGE-INSPIRED BACHELOR PAD. THE RESULT IS A DECADENT MODERN-PRIMITIVE RETREAT THAT'S WITHIN YOUR REACH*

Sometime in the past decade the bachelor pad lost its personality in an overabundance of midcentury-modern mediocrity. It was in need of serious manscaping. To conceive a masculine makeover we turned to Taavo Somer, the man who nearly single-handedly butched up the urban male. If you've seen a taxidermy head on a restaurant wall, a new but vintage-looking barbershop or a young man in a classic tweed suit accessorized with a watch fob, you can thank Somer, whose Freemans restaurant and stores have launched a nationwide obsession with the well-worn and classically gentlemanly. Welcome to his fantasy.

A GARAGE THAT ROCKS

1

SKIP THE GYM

• Somer filled the garage with objects that are both functional and beautiful. Before CrossFit and other exercise fads, there was the manly art of pugilism. Hanging a heavy bag looks cool and will keep you toned.

2

NOW BOARDING

• The finished ground-floor garage doubles as a hangout space. Surfboards are a symbol of leisure and oneness with the elements—even if you just leave them propped against the wall.

3

DRIVE IN

• Sliding-glass garage doors bring natural light into the industrial space. A collection of vintage motorcycles and cars serves as stylish transport, instant decoration and a statement of timeless sophistication.

TAAVO SOMER

New York City

After a decade working as an architect in Minneapolis and New York, Somer partnered with William Tigertt to open Freemans restaurant in downtown Manhattan. The nostalgic space offered early-American fare, spawned countless imitators and launched the Freemans empire: a clothing line, a chain of barbershops and more restaurants. Somer has consulted on the design of some of New York's more modish restaurants and hotels and now runs a design firm called Friends and Family.

THE SITE

Somer's challenge was to turn this typical urban post-industrial building into a rustic yet lavish domicile.

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH C. RUTHERFORD

LOFTY AMBITIONS

WARM THINGS UP

• A fireplace, reclaimed wood and a textile sculpture by artist Sheila Hicks warm up the industrial space. Yes, that couch is suede. Yes, it's tufted. And no, you and your guests will never want to get up from it. The chessboard would be right at home in the seduction scene in *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

DITCH THE DIGITAL

• Sure, you just press PLAY on Pandora. But why sacrifice quality for quantity? In Somer's bachelor pad, an old-school hi-fi system complete with turntable and McIntosh tube amp produces the rich analog tones that nothing digital can touch. A low-slung credenza is filled with vintage vinyl LPs so your guests can play DJ.

RAISE THE ROOF

POOLSIDE

• A saltwater pool on the roof is kept at a balmy temperature by a solar heating system. The pool sits under a grotto-like structure for year-round aquatic fun, come rain or shine.

PITCH A TENT

• A canvas tepee provides instant privacy whenever you need it. Not much room on your rooftop? No problem. Tentsmiths.com sells tepees in a range of sizes, starting at about $700 for a 12-footer.

SMOKING HOT

• In this era of culinary one-upmanship, you need to bring your A-game. Go beyond the grill and invest in a smokehouse to show you can compete with the other foodie dudes.

LIVING LARGE

• A living roof, planted with grass and an edible garden, softens the urban landscape. A collection of comfortable chaise longues and attendant bathing beauties add to the natural appeal of the space.

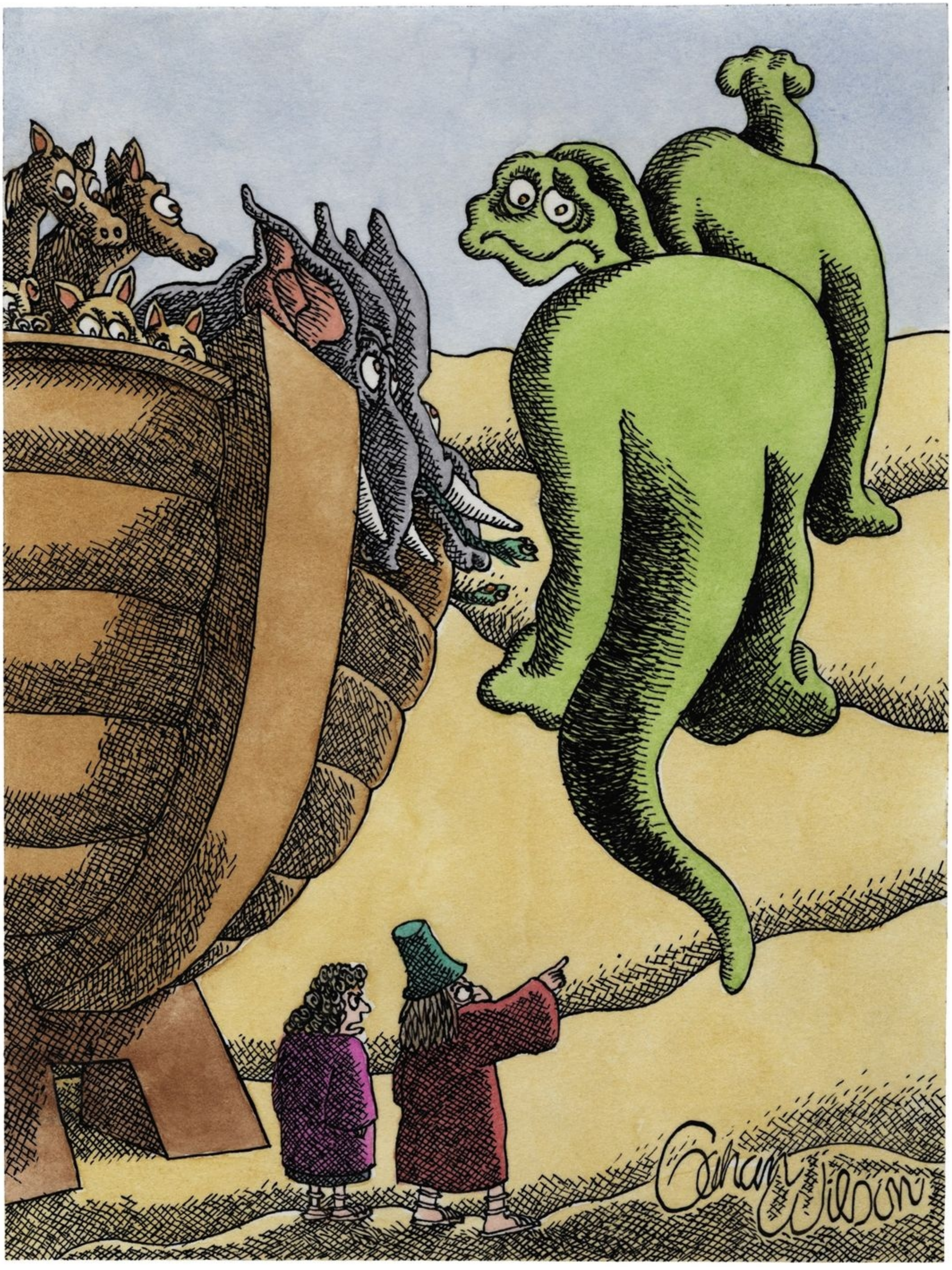
BITCHIN' KITCHEN

1 OPEN SESAME

• The updated kitchen is the one decidedly modern element in Somer's imagined bachelor pad and takes its cues from contemporary restaurant design: The long, open counter allows for communal, or exhibitionist, cooking. Hiding appliances behind panel doors and under the counter keeps the space airy and sleek.

2 OPEN BAR

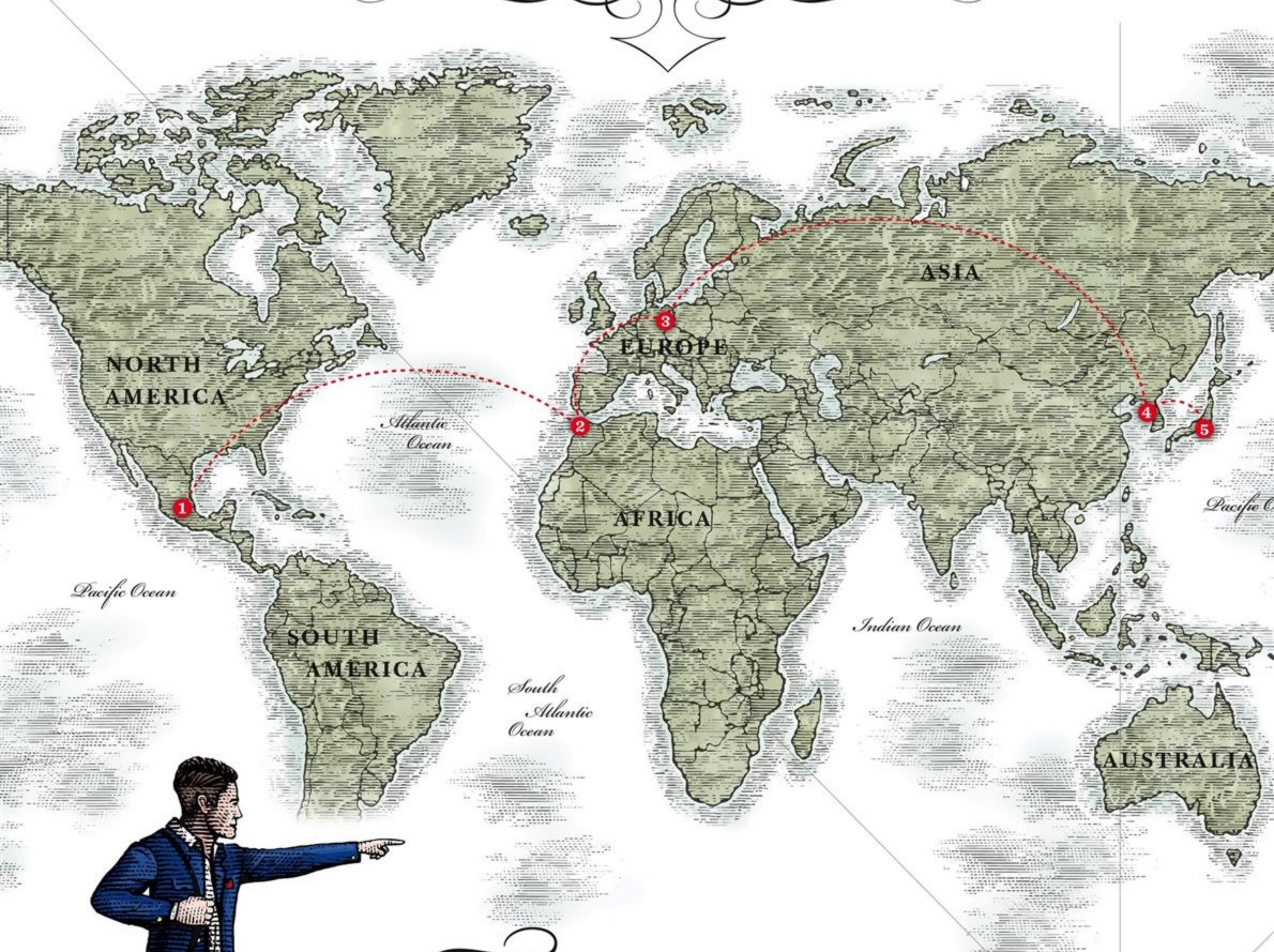
• The extra-long counter opens to the common living area and also doubles as a bar. A well-provisioned wine refrigerator, amply stocked with wine and champagne, allows guests to help themselves. Bonus: The self-serve element lets you host parties without having to stop and play bartender.

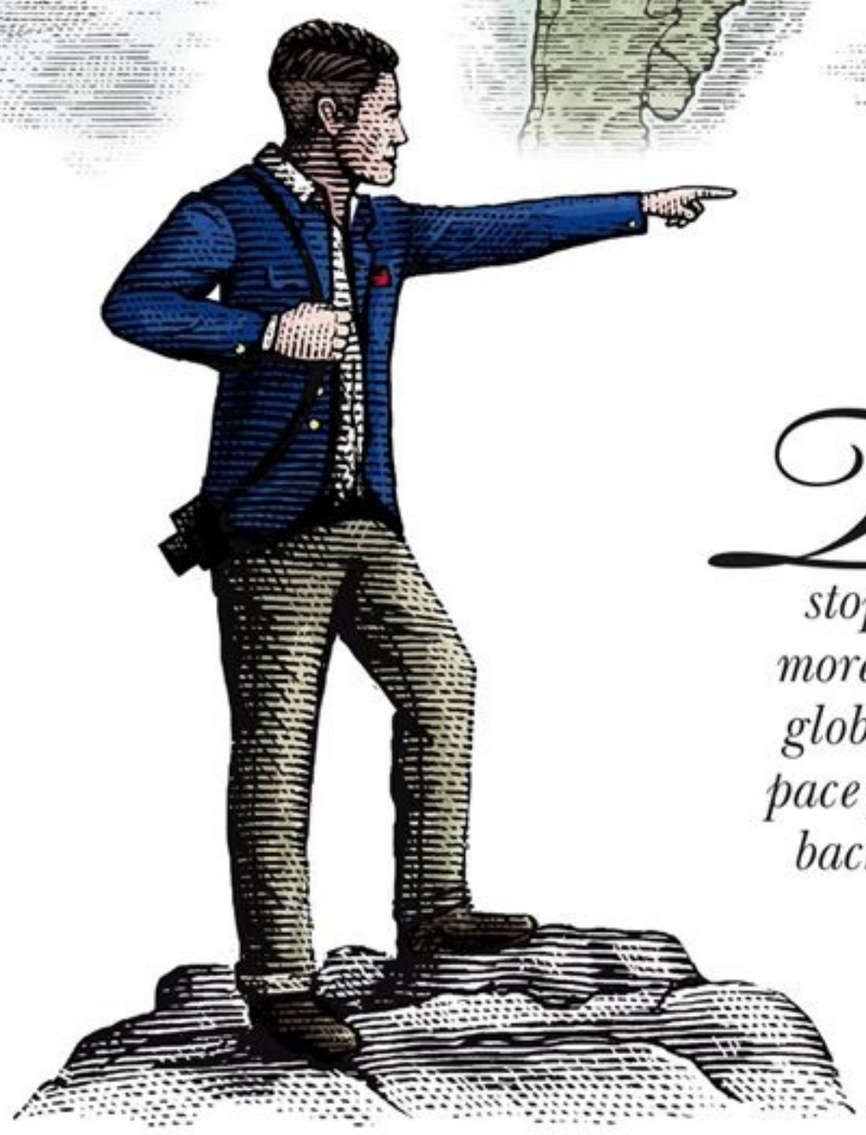


"What is this thing with you about dinosaurs?"

The New Grand Tour

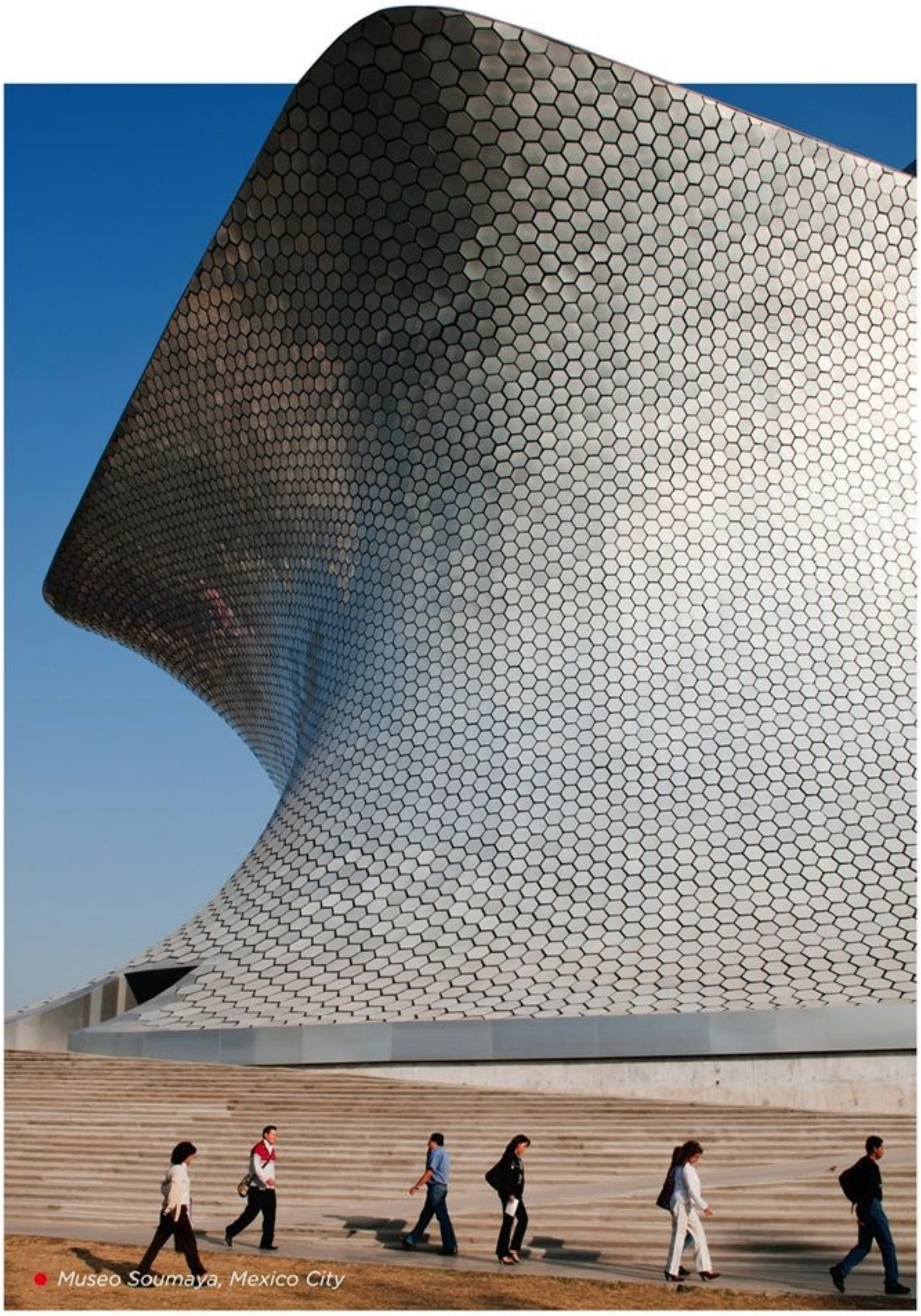
YOU'VE PLAYED OUT PARIS AND ROAMED THROUGH ROME. IT'S TIME TO HIT THE NEW CAPITALS OF COOL





Travel remains a rite of passage for the modern gentleman, but the traditional stops on the grand tours of yore have become more about history than currency. Dive into the global good life in the cities that are setting the pace for style, culture and nightlife. So ditch the backpack, bring your best blazer and upgrade your worldly experience to first class.

~ ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVEN NOBLE ~



Museo Soumaya, Mexico City

1 Mexico City

TO LIVE LUXURIOUSLY (AND NOT DANGEROUSLY), GO SOUTH OF THE BORDER, YOUNG MAN

➤ Let's once and for all dispel the notion that Mexico City is in its entirety a dangerous town—especially if you focus on the chic Polanco neighborhood, a hotbed of style, culture and cuisine.

BOOK 'EM

• Mexico City is full of preening, look-at-me hotels, but affairs are altogether more discreet at Las Alcobas, an intimate, 35-room establishment that values attentiveness and service more than attention-getting and scene-making. The rooms are luxurious but not ostentatious; the bathrooms are outfitted with every great amenity, most notably space. Its palette features soothing creams, grays and lavenders offset with warm woods and geometric stone accents.

GIMME CULTURE

• Some men buy their wives paintings for big occasions. Business mogul Carlos Slim honored his late wife with a museum. (Don't try to keep up, *hermano*.) Museo Soumaya opened in 2011 in Plaza Carso with a strikingly modern facade made of some 16,000 hexagonal aluminum tiles. The slick exterior stands in contrast to the classical European masterworks collected within, a list of which reads like an art history textbook befitting, well, a Mexican billionaire: Da Vinci, Degas, El Greco, Matisse, Monet, Picasso, Tintoretto and nearly 400 pieces by Rodin (Slim's wife was a fan).

DROP THE CHALUPA

• Michelin has yet to discover Mexico, but when it does, the good inspectors will have but a short stroll between Pujol and Biko, which are currently holding at numbers 36 and 38 on San Pellegrino's World's 50 Best Restaurants list. Pujol is particular noteworthy. Its minimalist decor (dark woods and stark white spotlights) focuses diners on chef Enrique Olvera's inventive twist on traditional Mexican cuisine: caviar soufflé, fried frog leg with poblano chili, guava sorbet with mezcal and worm salt. The showstopper is the piñata, a sugar orb filled with chocolate, tiny marshmallows and caramel. The defense rests. Easily.—*Pavia Rosati*

access to the gardens, red-clay tennis courts and glass fitness pavilion, a spa treatment at the *zellige*-tiled deluxe hammam, an opulent lunch and a few laps in the enormous turquoise pool. An afternoon aperitif at the hotel's Le Bar Churchill keeps things cool and civilized (the British prime minister was a hotel regular).

GO SUPPER CLUBBING

• After a requisite trip to the night market, take a taxi outside the city center for dinner and drinks in the garden lounge at Bo & Zin supper club. There's a fire pit, champagne cocktails, sushi appetizers and private tents. Somehow, some way you'll end up at rose-petal-strewn Le Comptoir Darna to appreciate (along with a posse of pretty French girls and well-dressed Moroccans) the art of belly dancing. Some traditions are too good to give up.—*Jeralyn Gerba*

2 Marrakech

SOUK THINGS UP LIKE A PRINCE IN MOROCCO

➤ It's a bold new era in Marrakech. Sure, souk culture is alive and well inside the old city walls—you'll recognize the jumbled cast of snake charmers, storytellers, hawkers and hagglers. But the city's postcolonial patina has been rubbed clean by boutique hotels, deluxe hammams and high-end restaurants. These days a stopover at the gateway to Africa is a must for any modern-day prince.

LIVE LAVISHLY

• For a taste of imperial splendor, head to La Mamounia, an insanely good-looking heritage hotel that mixes Berber-Andalusian architecture with the best modern amenities. A day pass gives you

La Mamounia, Marrakech

Mogg & Melzer, Berlin

3 Berlin

WHO NEEDS FLORENCE WHEN BERLIN IS HAVING A MODERN RENAISSANCE?

➤ The German capital is undergoing a cultural revival. Berlin is flush with artists and musicians as well as tech geniuses and gentrifiers who are building a new brand for the city. Underground goes upscale as art, commerce and cash merge into a more polished (or deliberately unpolished) design-driven experience.

GET HIGH CULTURE

• Jüdische Mädchenschule, a heavily restored landmark building, has become something of a cultural lab for Jewish-inspired gastronomy and ultramodern art. Contemporary galleries line the floor above Mogg & Melzer, a modern pastrami sandwich shop run by a club owner and a DJ intent on elevating the experience. In the same building, between Kosher Classroom restaurant and a museum dedicated to the Kennedys, there's Pauly Saal, a classy dining room in the Weimar style that pays homage to old-fashioned foods such as homemade wurst and rotisserie meats.

GET HIGH STYLE

• A 21st century church of sneakerology, Generation 13 features a new museum, café and shop housing high-end, hard-to-find and historical kicks. Top off the night by tapping into the city's best export: the party as art form. Das Gift is a new pub with video installations, whiskey, DJs and a jukebox stocked with specially mixed CDs by musicians including Robert Smith and Mogwai.—*Jeralyn Gerba*

4 Seoul

GO GANGNAM STYLE IN THE BOOMING KOREAN COSMOPOLIS

➤ No, the locals aren't really hippity-hopping around Seoul in tacky blue tuxedo jackets. But they are flexing their style in Gangnam, the high-rise district south of the Han River that encompasses the neighborhoods (or *dongs*) of Samseong-dong, Apgujeong-dong and Cheongdam-dong. You'll get used to it.

CONSUME CONSPICUOUSLY

• Go shopping, because that's what everyone else is doing, in vast department stores like the Galleria Luxury Hall and temples to luxury like Maison Hermès Dosan Park. The more interesting action is at concept shops like Koon, a multistory boutique that sells European, American, Korean and Japanese brands—sweaters from Howlin, the indie division of Belgian label Morrison, and puffy vests from Rocky Mountain Featherbed. If you're shopping for your lady, get her something from Yohji Yamamoto's daughter Limi Feu.

GO BEYOND GALBI

• After the inevitable barbecue binge, you'll have a meat hangover like you haven't had since that *ojo de bife* fest in Buenos Aires. That's when you'll head to Gorilla in the Kitchen for something healthy made without butter and served in a sleek room filled with reflective surfaces. You need a drink. Maybe *makgeolli,* the rice-based fizzy drink traditionally enjoyed by farmers that all the kids are crazy about now. Order it at Lound, a chic late-night bar where the action starts out mild at the ground-floor wine bar and gets rowdier as you make your way to the clubby fourth floor.—*Pavia Rosati*

5 Tokyo

THE FEVER FOR JAPAN IS NEVER LOST IN TRANSLATION

➤ If conveyor-belt sushi and Nintendo still have a place in your heart, you can bet your Bape sneakers Tokyo is the place for you.

GO FISH

• In the spirit of Japanese efficiency, make your jet lag work for you and set out at 3:30 A.M. for a pilgrimage to the holy land of sushi, the Tsukiji fish market. Leave any later than that and your chances of being one of the 120 bleary-eyed witnesses at the predawn tuna auctions are approximately nil. While the bidding rages on (a record was set on January 5, 2013: 488 pounds of bluefin tuna for a cool $1.8 million), wait patiently (read: two hours) for a spot at the bar at Sushi Dai, in row six of the market. The 12 seats fill up and—thankfully—turn over relatively quickly. The toro is the stuff of legend.

HIT THE STREET STYLE

• Get your wits about you at Daikanyama T-Site. The multimedia complex from bookseller giant Tsutaya offers a one-stop design education. Wind your way around art and architecture books, past wall after wall of magazines and periodicals and through lounge areas fit for having a philosophical tête-à-tête or drooling over travel tomes; all routes seemingly lead to either the in-store Starbucks or Muji. The courtyard hosts live music, performances and weekend pop-up markets where locals linger after eating pasta and flatbread pizza at nearby Ivy Place.

HIT THE BARS

• Erase any cultural IQ points you might have accrued earlier in your trip with a visit to Robot Restaurant for a manga spectacle writ large. How can you pass up a trip to Kabukicho (the red-light district)? How can you say no to acrobatic, bikini-clad girls? Who are you to turn down a ride on a robot? Especially when the beer is so cheap.—*Crystal Meers*

CRACKING THE BAR CODE

THE TOP 14 COCKTAIL-MAKING SECRETS BARTENDERS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW. BUT WE GOT THE BEST ONES TO SPILL

1

FLY THE COUPE

• As cocktail king Dale DeGroff, pioneering bartender at New York City's Rainbow Room and author of *The Craft of the Cocktail,* has said, "the oversize martini glass has ruined many an evening." For more reasonable portion sizes and the option to try more than one kind of cocktail without getting soused, buy a set of 8.25-ounce Libbey Retro coupes (pictured, $44 for a set of 12, amazon.com).

2

STAY CLASSIC

• In the bartending boom a new cocktail is born every minute (and usually involves impossible-to-find ingredients such as house-made sea-buckthorn tincture). But few can top the classics collected in Jerry Thomas's 1887 *Bar-Tenders Guide.* Handsome reprints are available for about $10.

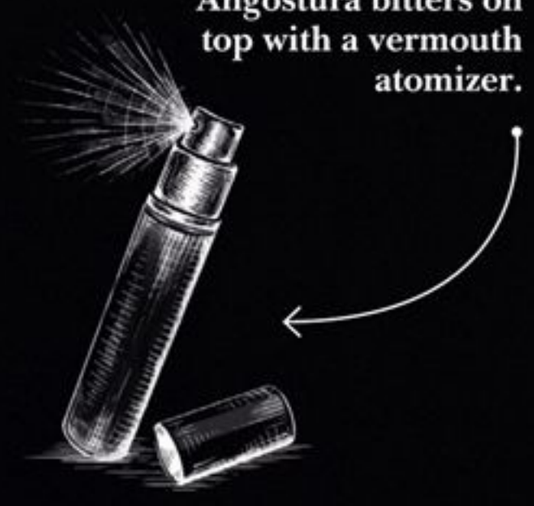
3

THE CLOVER CLUB

• Dev Johnson, head bartender at New York speakeasy Employees Only, suggests you try a flip, a classic cocktail made delightfully frothy with nothing more fussy than an egg white. Herewith, the clover club…blowing minds since 1911.

• 2 ounces gin
• ¾ ounce fresh lemon juice (about half a lemon)
• ½ ounce raspberry syrup or grenadine
• ½ ounce simple syrup
• 1 egg white, very fresh

Combine ingredients and ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake vigorously for 10 seconds and strain into a martini glass. To give this drink some Playboy flair, cut a Rabbit Head stencil from a margarine lid and spritz Angostura bitters on top with a vermouth atomizer.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SATOSHI

DRINK ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT HARKNESS

While the state of the American cocktail is better than ever, you'd think you need an advanced degree in mixology to decipher the drinks menus at some of the more pretentious lounges. You know, places where olives are "spherified," eyedroppers are used and the bartenders take 15 minutes to mix your drink. We're going to let you in on a little secret: The old ways are the best ways and are easy enough for you to be your own bartender. To give you the essential tips and tools that are the foundation of a good drink (principles that have remained relatively unchanged since the 19th century) we checked in with some of our favorite bartenders from around the country, people who know how to maximize a drink with minimal fuss.

4

GET BITTER

• Bitters are one of the easiest cheats a bartender can use to add complexity to a drink. Mix classic Angostura with gin to make a pink gin, one of the simplest traditional cocktails around. And stock up on modern versions such as Regans' No. 6 orange bitters to add citrus essence without sweetness or acid, and Bittermens mole-flavored bitters for a chocolaty spin on a margarita.

Bittermens Xocolatl Mole bitters, $25, amazon.com

5

CHERRY ON TOP

• **No red dye no. 5 was used in the making of the real-deal Italian maraschino cherries from Luxardo. The intense syrup is an ingredient in its own right. Stir into a tom collins for subtle sweetness.**

Luxardo cherries, $17, kegworks.com

6

STIR THINGS UP

James Bond was wrong; the rules of cocktail making are thus: Shake cocktails that include fruit juice (shaking blends the juice and alcohol better). Stir cocktails that are simply spirits over ice (e.g., a martini or a manhattan). For the latter category, this mixing glass from Japan is just the right size. Thirty revolutions with a stirrer will blend and chill all the ingredients.

Yarai mixing glass, $39, cocktailkingdom.com

7

PERFECT MANHATTAN

With equal parts sweet and dry vermouth, this is a drink for all tastes.

- *2 ounces rye or bourbon*
- *½ ounce sweet vermouth*
- *½ ounce dry vermouth*
- *Angostura or orange bitters*
- *maraschino cherry*

Combine liquid ingredients over ice in a mixing glass. Stir 30 times. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with maraschino cherry.

8

MAKE N-ICE

• There's no easier way to ruin a glass of expensive liquor than to add a few shriveled ice cubes from your malodorous freezer. "Good ice is a crucial ingredient," says Craig Schoettler, the 26-year-old prodigy who launched the groundbreaking beverage program at Aviary in Chicago. "Whatever you put into your drink is going to get consumed." Schoettler, who now runs a less high-concept setup at Drumbar in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood, recommends making ice with the best water possible and not storing it in the freezer for too long. You want the ice to taste pure, not like last month's leftovers. Schoettler also gets creative with cubes: For the Cape Cod fizz he freezes organic cranberry juice into cubes and pours vodka and soda over them for a twist on the vodka cranberry.

9

• If your tap water tastes off, skip the ice maker and freeze your own cubes using neutral-tasting water. "No one is going to be able to discern if you use Evian," Schoettler says. "Filtered water is just fine."

Tovolo ice cube tray, $7, cocktailkingdom.com

10

BARREL UP

When Jeffrey Morgenthaler, bartender at Clyde Common in Portland, poured a negroni into an empty whiskey barrel on a lark, the ultrasmooth result sparked a nationwide trend. "We barrel-age only cocktails that have some sort of fortified wine in them, like vermouth or sherry," Morgenthaler says. When a spirit-driven cocktail (read: no fresh ingredients) sits in an oak barrel, the wine oxidizes and picks up notes of grass, citrus and mushroom. The aging also pulls out hints of vanilla, caramel and wood. And the process is remarkably simple: Just dump the ingredients into a barrel and wait.

Morgenthaler recommends using a one-liter Tuthilltown Spirits barrel ($60, tuthilltown.com).

11

BARREL-AGED BIJOU

- *11 ounces Tanqueray or Beefeater gin*
- *11 ounces green Chartreuse*
- *11 ounces Cinzano sweet vermouth*
- *1 teaspoon orange bitters*
- *lemon peel*

Soak barrel in warm water for 48 hours to swell the wood. Combine liquid ingredients and pour into barrel using a funnel. Seal barrel and let ingredients age for three weeks. Decant barrel through a double-mesh strainer into a large bottle or pitcher. Shake ingredients and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with lemon peel.

12

MUDDLE THROUGH

• Muddling (a.k.a. smashing) fresh fruit and herbs in a glass infuses a drink with the flavors of the season (think lime- and mint-redolent mojito). Matthew Biancaniello, the L.A.-based mixologist who holds court at Cliff's Edge, uses his muddler as much as his cocktail shaker. To create the drink below, he mined a farmers' market for botanical inspiration. The result is spicy, sweet, herbaceous and bracing.

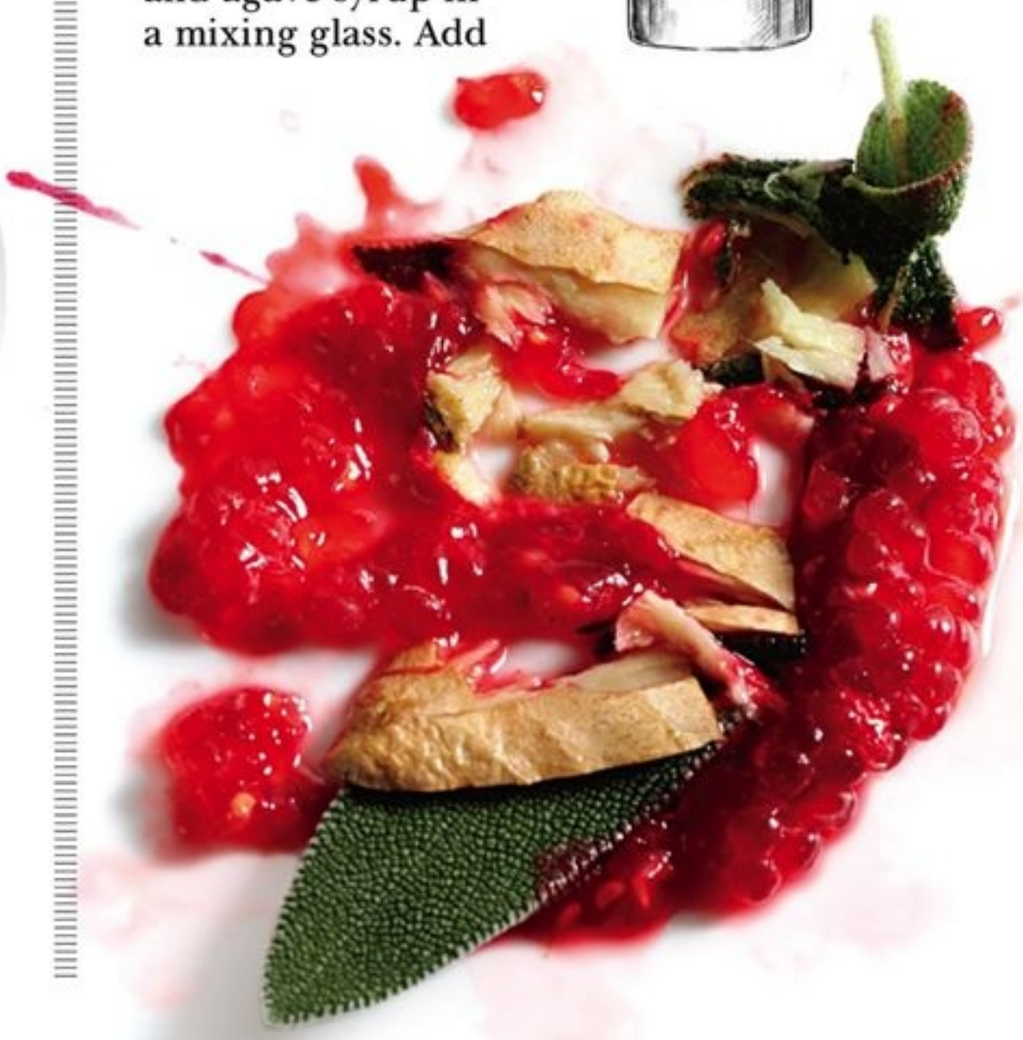
TAG bar muddler, $18, barsupplies.com

13

SAGE HEAVEN

- *3 sage leaves*
- *5 raspberries*
- *1 slice ginger root, 1/8 inch thick*
- *¾ ounce fresh lemon juice*
- *¾ ounce agave syrup (1:1 ratio water to agave)*
- *2 ounces vodka or gin*
- *4 blackberries*

Muddle sage, raspberries, ginger root, lemon juice and agave syrup in a mixing glass. Add vodka or gin and shake. Strain into a collins glass over ice. Garnish with blackberries.



14

THE BARTENDER'S BOTTLE

• Many spirits are designed to be smooth and sippable, but bartenders Dushan Zaric, Simon Ford and Jason Kosmas yearned for liquor that would stand up for itself in a well-made cocktail. They tweaked recipes, upped the proof, designed an oversize yet ergonomic, bartender-friendly bottle and launched the 86 Co. We can attest that the resulting spirits make damn fine drinks. To achieve this, the partners consulted some of the best minds in the bartending world. Here's how they dialed in the design.

Tequila Cabeza, $43, Fords gin, $38, Caña Brava rum, $35, and Aylesbury Duck vodka (not pictured), $31, the86co.com

LOWER RING

ERIC ALPERIN

Bartender, the Varnish, Los Angeles

A Bartending can get athletic. Alperin suggested a ridge on the neck to keep fingers from slipping during a two-bottled pour.

ERGONOMIC NECK

WILLY SHINE

Beverage consultant, New York City

B Shine tested every version of the neck behind the bar and chose this one for comfort and consistency of pours.

MIDDLE GRIP

LYNNETTE MARRERO

Co-founder, Speed Rack, New York City

C The one-liter bottle is wider than a standard bottle, so Marrero requested an indentation to accommodate smaller hands.

MEASUREMENTS

JASON KOSMAS

Cocktail consultant, Dallas

D The ruler helps with inventory control. It also allows you to use an empty bottle to premix cocktails for parties.

THE FORMULA

FRANCISCO J. FERNANDEZ

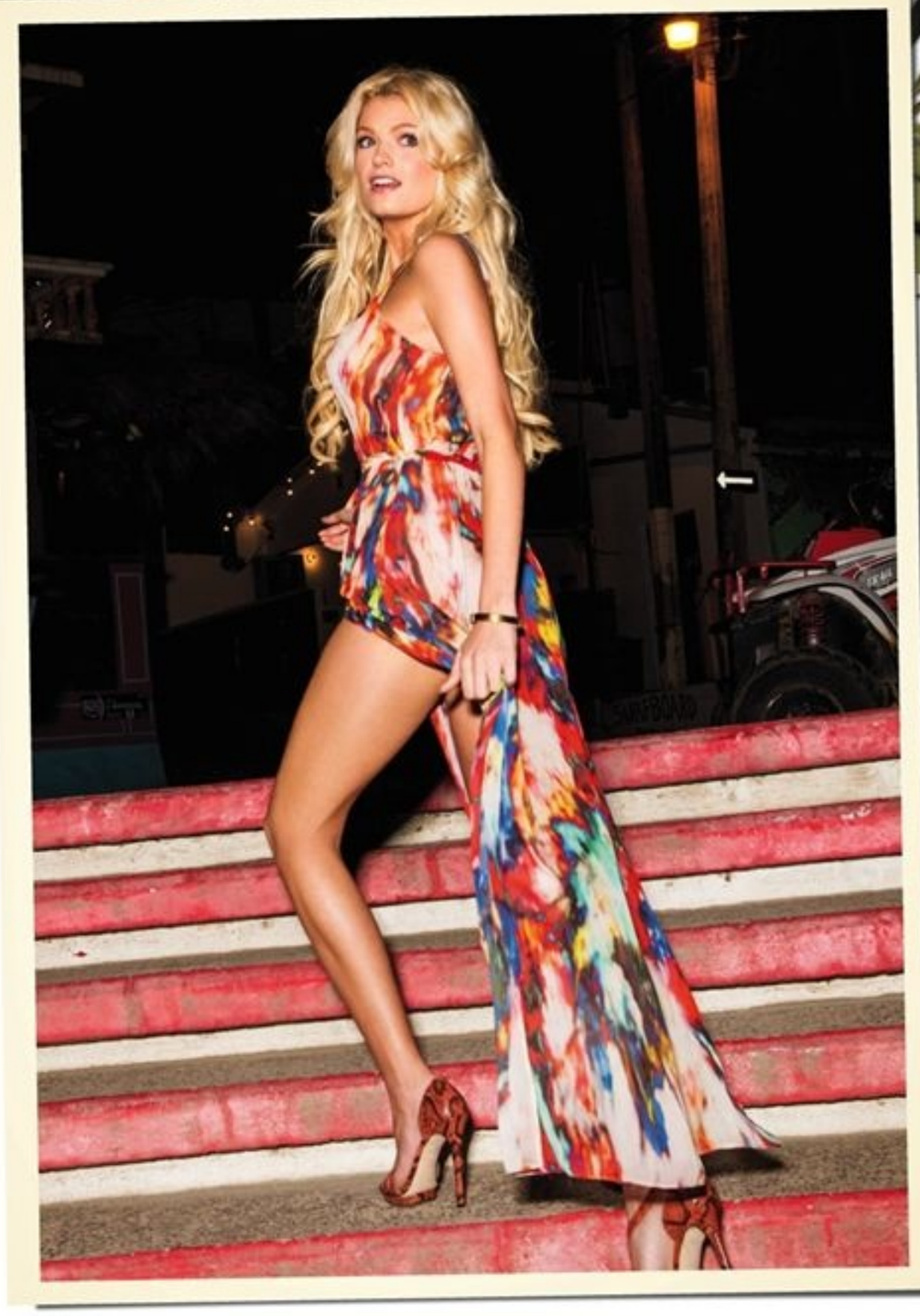
Distiller and former Cuban minister of rum

E Fernandez modeled the Caña Brava rum recipe on Cuba's embargoed Havana Club rum, Hemingway's favorite.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH C. RUTHERFORD

TEQUILA SUNRISE

MISS MAY HEADS TO MEXICO FOR A CINCO DE MAYO BASH



I absolutely love to travel and see the world," says Miss May Kristen Nicole. "Spain, Rome, Venice, St.-Tropez—I can never get enough." As grand as those destinations may be, sometimes the greatest escape is closer to home. "Mexico is my favorite getaway of all," says the statuesque California-born-and-bred beauty. "And it's right in my own backyard. From my airport to a Mexican beach is four hours." Naturally we wanted Kristen to be happy, glowing and hot as a chili pepper for her pictorial. So off we jetted to a beachfront villa in Punta Mita on the Pacific coast, just in time to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. Says Kristen, "I love Cinco de Mayo. Why? Because I love tequila. It's my drink of choice." When we got to the beach, Miss May didn't need any tequila to loosen up in front of the camera—no surprise since she's an accomplished bikini model. As for her Playmate status, she'll drink to that: down the hatch with a shot of Patrón. "I'm ecstatic, and I want to show everything I've got," she says. "I want to be sexy, to be beautiful, to be smart—I want to be the girl every guy wants."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH RYAN

/TheMissKristen @TheMissKristen @TheMissKristen

FISH TACO
EAT ME

MISS MAY

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

Kristen Nicole

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Kristen Nicole

BUST: 34D WAIST: 24" HIPS: 34"

HEIGHT: 5'9" WEIGHT: 115

BIRTH DATE: 11-15-89 BIRTHPLACE: Escondido, CA

AMBITIONS: Designing interiors for high-end homes, modeling and appreciating all life has to offer.

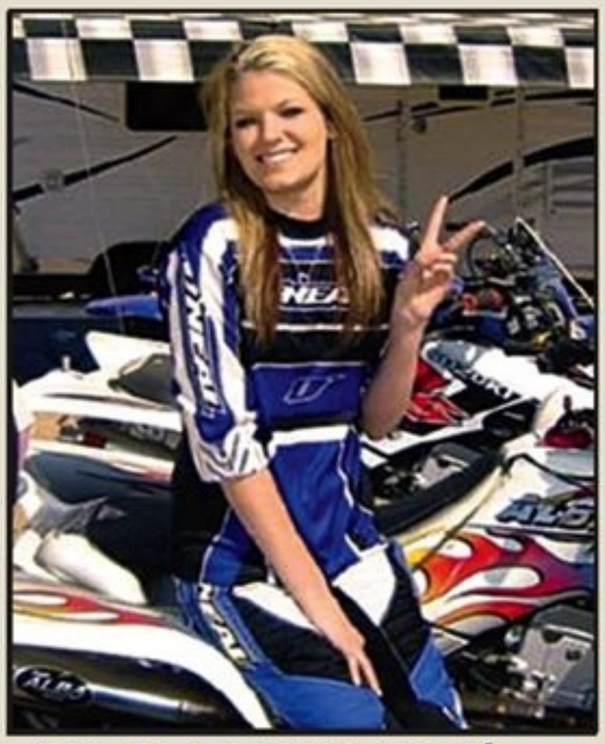
TURN-ONS: I love nothing more than when an attentive man is kissing my neck and breasts. Heaven!

TURNOFFS: 1. Men who can't carry on a conversation. 2. Bad drivers have zero chance of getting into my pants; you've been warned! 3. Men who expect me to marry them for a shot of Patrón. :)

QUIET TIME: Though I love to party and travel, I also have a calm, homebody side. Reading by the fireplace, cooking a romantic dinner or just bedazzling whatever is in reach brings me true serenity.

MY PHILOSOPHY: Hair and nails are a legitimate hobby!!!

Frolicking in Catalina.



Trying out my quad skills.

Think pink!

HUIZACHE
1800
1921
BRAHA
FORTALEZA
copas
1800
Bandido
Don Julio
REAL

PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

An old miser read in an advertisement that the new whorehouse in town charged $50 for the first visit and $25 thereafter. The first time he visited he knocked on the door and the madam replied, "Who's there?"

The man promptly answered, "It's me again."

Could I try on that dress in the window?" a woman asked a store clerk.

"Certainly," the clerk replied, "but I'd prefer that you use the dressing room."

I think we should go dutch," a woman told her date. "You pay for dinner and a movie, and the rest of your night can be on me."

Why does every man want a son?

Because with a boy you have to worry about only one penis and with a girl you have to worry about all of them.

Two men were drinking together in a bar when one said to the other, "I think I'm going to divorce my wife. She hasn't spoken to me in more than two months."

"You'd better think it over," his friend told him. "Women like that are hard to find."

While they were chatting over coffee, a woman said to her friend, "I have to be very careful not to get pregnant."

"I don't understand," replied the friend. "I thought your husband had a vasectomy."

The woman answered, "Exactly."

The irony of a blow job is that even though you have her on her knees, she has you by the balls.

A man told his doctor, "I haven't slept for three days."

"Good," the doctor replied. "Sleeping for 72 hours would be very unhealthy."

What do you get when you take MDMA and birth control?

A trip without the kids.

What do you call female Viagra?

Jewelry.

A recent study found that 64 percent of women have used vibrators. The other 36 percent have new ones.

A man was pouring his date a cocktail. "Say when," he told her.

She replied, "Right after this drink."

If you could have Bill Gates's entire fortune or solve world hunger…what color would your Lamborghini be?

Every fight is a food fight if you're a cannibal.

Two guys were discussing their old flames. "I once dated a dwarf," the first one said.

"What was she like?" the second asked.

The first said, "I was just nuts over her."

What do you call a bunch of women who hang around prostitutes?

Support hoes.

A teenage son asked his father, "Pop, did you follow your dreams in life?"

"No," the father replied, "my dreams were shattered years ago."

"How many years ago?" the boy asked.

The father asked him, "How old are you?"

Concerned that her daughter was dressing too provocatively, a mother asked, "Dear, are you hooking?"

"Yes, Mama," the daughter replied. "I made $400.05 last night."

"Who gave you the nickel?" the mother asked.

Her daughter replied, "They all did."

Two men were discussing their weekends. "I got so blotto that I forgot my girlfriend's name," the first said.

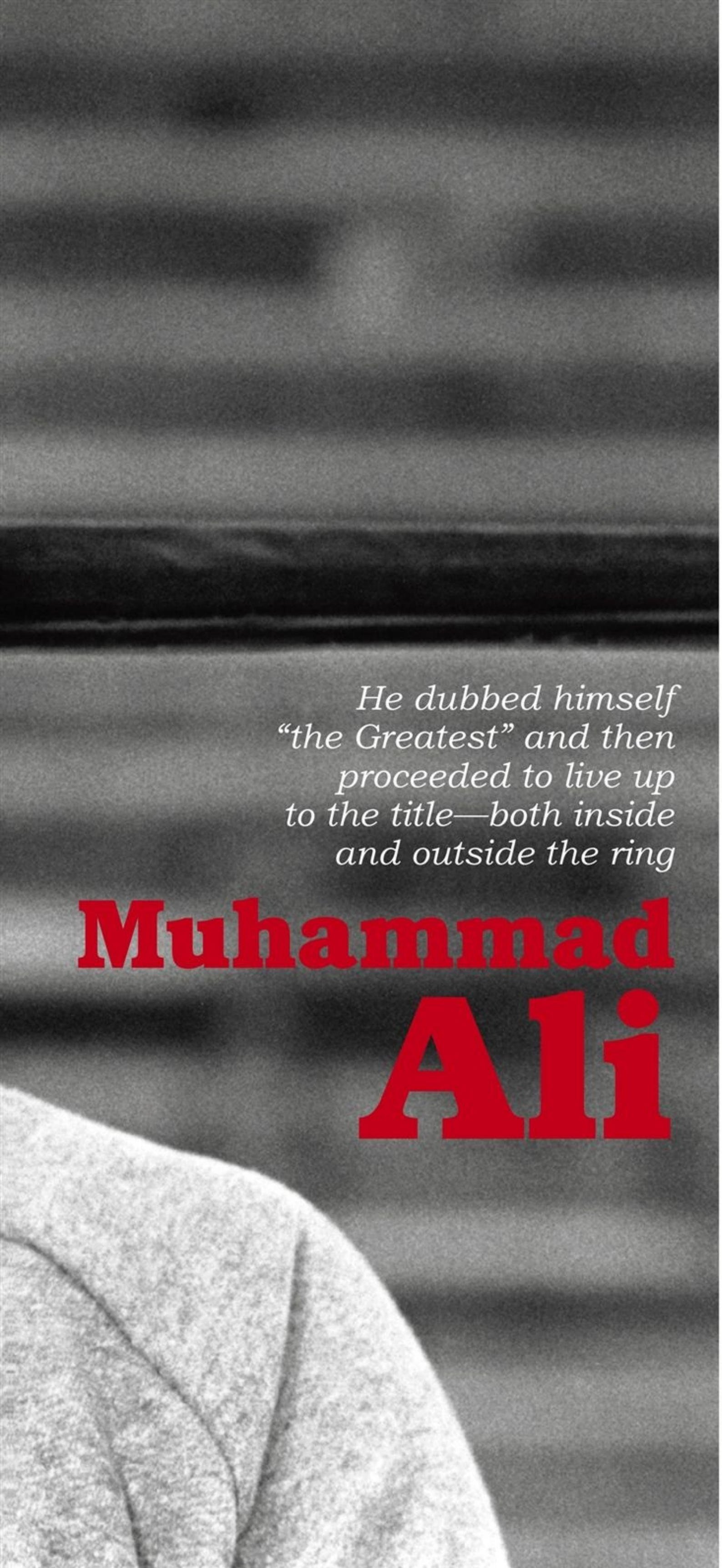
"That's nothing," the second responded. "Saturday night I was so drunk that I walked across the dance floor to use the bathroom and I won the dance contest."

Send your jokes to Playboy Party Jokes, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or by e-mail to jokes@playboy.com. PLAYBOY *will pay $100 to the contributors whose submissions are selected.*

"I have certain criteria for the men I date, Charley…and I'm afraid you came up a little short."

50 YEARS
of the
PLAYBOY
INTERVIEW

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: MUHAMMAD ALI



HOWARD L. BINGHAM

Muhammad Ali was "the Greatest," a title no less accurate for having been bestowed, with characteristic swagger, by Ali himself. Indeed, Ali was among the greatest and most beloved boxers in the history of the sport. He won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics and went on to win 56 out of 61 professional fights. He is the only boxer in history to defend the world heavyweight championship 19 times. In 1999 *Sports Illustrated,* which featured Ali on its cover 38 times, named him sportsman of the century.

In the ring Ali was known for toying with his opponents. As he famously described his style, he would "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," dancing around his competition, exhausting them as he landed hammer blows. Outside the ring he became a larger-than-life celebrity who hung out with politicians and movie stars. (The actor Will Smith portrays him in one of several biopics.)

Ali's career was not without controversy. Born Cassius Clay (he changed his name when he joined the Nation of Islam), Ali began fighting at the age of 12 after his bicycle was stolen. He wanted revenge, and a police officer told him to learn to fight. A series of local matches led him, at 18, to the Olympics victory. He was drafted in the 1960s during the Vietnam war but refused to enlist. (He said, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong.") He was arrested, found guilty, stripped of his heavyweight crown and barred from boxing, a suspension that lasted until he won an appeal in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Fighting again, he went on to win some of the most memorable bouts in boxing history—against Joe Frazier, Sonny Liston, Leon Spinks and George Foreman—though his career ended after a series of humiliating defeats.

As a Muslim, Ali became politically active, working in the civil rights struggle. Last year football legend Jim Brown said, "America started with slavery and ended up with a black president. Muhammad Ali was a part of that…a big part." Shortly after the end of his boxing career, Ali became ill with Parkinson's disease but continued to work as a philanthropist. He also tried his hand at diplomacy. In 1990 he flew to Iraq and met with Saddam Hussein to secure the release of American hostages. Ali, who has nine children and is on his fourth marriage, now lives near Phoenix. He has received two presidential awards for his public service. "As a fighter, you were something spectacular," Barack Obama told Ali on his birthday in 2012. "You shocked the world, and you inspired it too. And even after all the titles and legendary bouts, you're still doing it." Our interviewer, journalist **Lawrence Linderman,** met with Ali in 1975 after his historic win against the favorite, George Foreman, in the famous Rumble in the Jungle in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).

PLAYBOY: What's the physical sensation of really being nailed by hitters like George Foreman and Joe Frazier?

ALI: Take a stiff tree branch in your hand and hit it against the floor and you'll feel your hand go *boinggggggg*. Well, getting tagged is the same kind of jar on your whole body, and you need at least 10 or 20 seconds to make that go away. You get hit again before that, you got another *boinggggggg*.

PLAYBOY: After you're hit that hard, does your body do what you want it to do?

ALI: No, because your mind controls your body and the moment *(continued on page 137)*

LIQUID ASSETS

Photography by **SATOSHI**

THE RIGHT COLOGNE CAN PAY BIG DIVIDENDS. PUT TOGETHER A DIVERSIFIED PORTFOLIO WITH THESE NEW FRAGRANCES FOR SPRING

1. HOT TIP

Bulgari MAN Extreme, *$79*

The woodsy and citrus notes in this invigorating cologne will make every day at the office a good day.

2. MUTUAL FUN

Versace Eros, *$80*

A seductive blend of fresh herbal top notes and deep cedar aromas.

3. CLOSE THE DEAL

Gentlemen Only by Givenchy, *$78*

Spicy peppercorn, nutmeg and orange make this a dinner-date-ready fragrance.

4. STANDARD AND POUR

Fan di Fendi Pour Homme Acqua, *$75*

This sophisticated scent combines lemon, lavender and masculine musk.

5. DOLLARS AND SCENTS

Reserve by Original Penguin, *$65*

Balancing dark spice and bright citrus, this is a fragrance to deploy for day or night.

6. PRIVATE EQUITY

Acqua Essenziale by Salvatore Ferragamo, *$80*

The lemon and rosemary scents in this cologne make for a Mediterranean vacation in a bottle.

7. THE GOLD STANDARD

1 Million by Paco Rabanne, *$59*

Go bold with this combination of grapefruit, mandarin orange, cinnamon and leather aromas.

HFR INDICES

February 8	Index Value	Dtd %	Mtd %	Ytd %
Global				
HFRX Global Hedge Fund Index	1174.62	0.0637	0.32	2.29
HFRX Equal Weighted Strategies Index	1144.74	-0.0501	0.22	1.65
HFRX Absolute Return Index	957.78	-0.0640	0.04	0.31
HFRX Market Directional Index	1088.38	0.0907	0.34	2.91
Equity Hedge				
HFRX Equity Hedge Index	1083.23	0.1994	0.64	3.30
HFRX EH: Equity Market Neutral Index	939.64	0.0296	0.04	0.42
HFRX EH: Fundamental Growth Index	1538.61	0.0180	0.35	2.72
HFRX EH: Fundamental Value Index	1016.29	0.3102	0.86	3.96
Event Driven				
HFRX Event Driven Index	1438.94	0.2165	0.49	3.88
HFRX ED: Distressed Restructuring Index	958.17	-0.0175	-0.22	0.59
HFRX ED: Merger Arbitrage Index	1512.26	0.0170	0.02	0.29
HFRX ED: Special Situations Index	1186.42	0.1509	0.64	4.88
Macro				
HFRX Macro/CTA Index	1154.98	0.0457	-0.04	0.05
HFRX Macro: Systematic Diversified CTA Index	1516.77	0.1181	-0.13	-0.22
Relative Value				
HFRX Relative Value Arbitrage Index	1188.47		0.15	1.66
HFRX RV: FI-Convertible Arbitrage Index	711.9		0.40	1.37
HFRX RV: Multi-Strategy Index	18		0.19	1.69
HFRI Monthly Strategy Indices - USD (Jan 2013)				
HFRI Fund Weighted Composite Index				2.76
HFRI Fund of Funds Composite Index				

Indices calculated by HFR (Hedge Fu

EQUITY IN

Feb 11	Low	Est. vol.	Open int.
DJIA	00	40	12,686
DJ Euro Sto		674,756	2,693,639
S&P 50		692	206,041
Mini S&P		227,150	3,039,366
Nasdaq 100		35	14,745
Mini Nasdaq		15	339,336
CAC 40			307,402
DAX			143,689
AEX			3,603
IBEX			551
SMI			
FTSE 1			
Hang Seng			
Nikkei 225†			
Topix			
KOSPI 200			

North American La
average vol
Previous

VOLATILITY I

	Day	W
VIX†		-0.00
VXD†	1714	
VXN†	0.47750	0.004
VDAX	-0.00500	-0.006 -0.006
	0.08643	
Libor*	0.97400	-0.004 0.015

Feb 12	Over night	One Week	Three months	One year
Australia				
Austria				
Belgium				
Canada				
Denmark	1.80			
Finland	1.83			
France	2.27			
Germany	1.64			
Greece	11.26			
Ireland	3.70	+2.06		
Italy	4.50	+2.86		
Japan	0.75	-0.89		

	Over night	One Week	Three months	One year
0.14	-0.020	0.040		
0.14	0.010			
09	0.020			
8	0.050		0.050	
72			0.005	
0039			0.008	
	0.003		0.032	
	0.001		0.024	

Notice 0.31-0.26

Interbank £	Over night	One Week	Three months	One year
	0.49-0.31	0.50-0.40	0.62-0.52	0.99-0.99

Libor rates come from BBA (see www.bba.org.uk) and
ces: US $, Euro & CDs: dealers; SDR int rate: IMF; EONIA:
LA 7 days notice: Tradition (UK).

Feb 12

	Short	7 days notice	One month	Three months	Six month	
ThomsonReu-		0.08 - 0.02	0.12 - 0.02	0.25 - 0.0	0.20	0.60 - 0.44
onReuters		0.02 - 0.22	0.01 - 0.19	0.02 - 0.0	0.06	0.40 - 0.32
		0.53 - 0.43	0.57 - 0.47	0.66 - 0.56	0.56	0.94 - 0.84
		0.15	0.05 - 0.15	0.08 - 0.12	0.0	0.32 - 0.12
		0.98	1.17 - 1.02	1.27 - 1.12	1.4	1.68 - 1.53
		0.21	0.36 - 0.26	0.47 - 0.37	0.8	0.72
		02	0.13 - 0.01	0.35 - 0.10	0.2	0.35 - 0.23
			0.31 - 0.05	0.53 - 0.38	0.4	0.56 - 0.31

US Dollar and Yen, others: tw day's notice.

BONDS - INDEX-LINKE

	Price Feb 11	Yield Feb 11	Yield Feb 8	Month return	Break even inflation*	Value Stock
Can 4.25% '21	138.86	-0.14	-0.14	0.15	2.17	5.2
Fr 2.25% '20	118.25	-0.18	-0.17	0.76	1.67	20.0
Swe 0.25% '22	99.93	0.36	0.35	-0.18	1.64	1
UK 2.5% '16	348.66	-2.25	-2.26	0.36	2.83	
UK 2.5% '24	347.42	-0.80	-0.81	0.29	3.14	
UK 2% '35	208.90	-0.20	-0.21	-0.37	3.41	
US 0.625% '21	113.46	-0.91	-0.90	0.06	2.51	
US 3.625% '31	155.51	-0.03	-0.01	-0.35	2.6	

Representative stocks from each major market Sou
* Diff between conventional and IL bond. † Local currencies,
convention, for UK Gilts inflation factor is applied to price
amount.

	Since	Last	Mth ago	Year ago
	16-12-2008	1.00	0.00-0.25	0.00-0.25
Prime		4.00	3.25	3.25
Discount	0.75	0.50	0.75	0.75
Repo	0.75	1.00	0.75	1.00
UK		1.00	0.50	0.50
O'night Cash		0.10	0.00-0.10	0.00-0.10
Libor targ	25	0.00-0.75	0.00-0.25	0.00-0.25

Source: ThomsonReuters

COMMODITIES

COMMODITIES

Energy		Price*	Change
WTI Crude Oil †	Mar	97.03	nc
Brent Crude Oil ‡	Mar	118.13	nc
RBOB Gasoline †	Mar	3.0212	nc

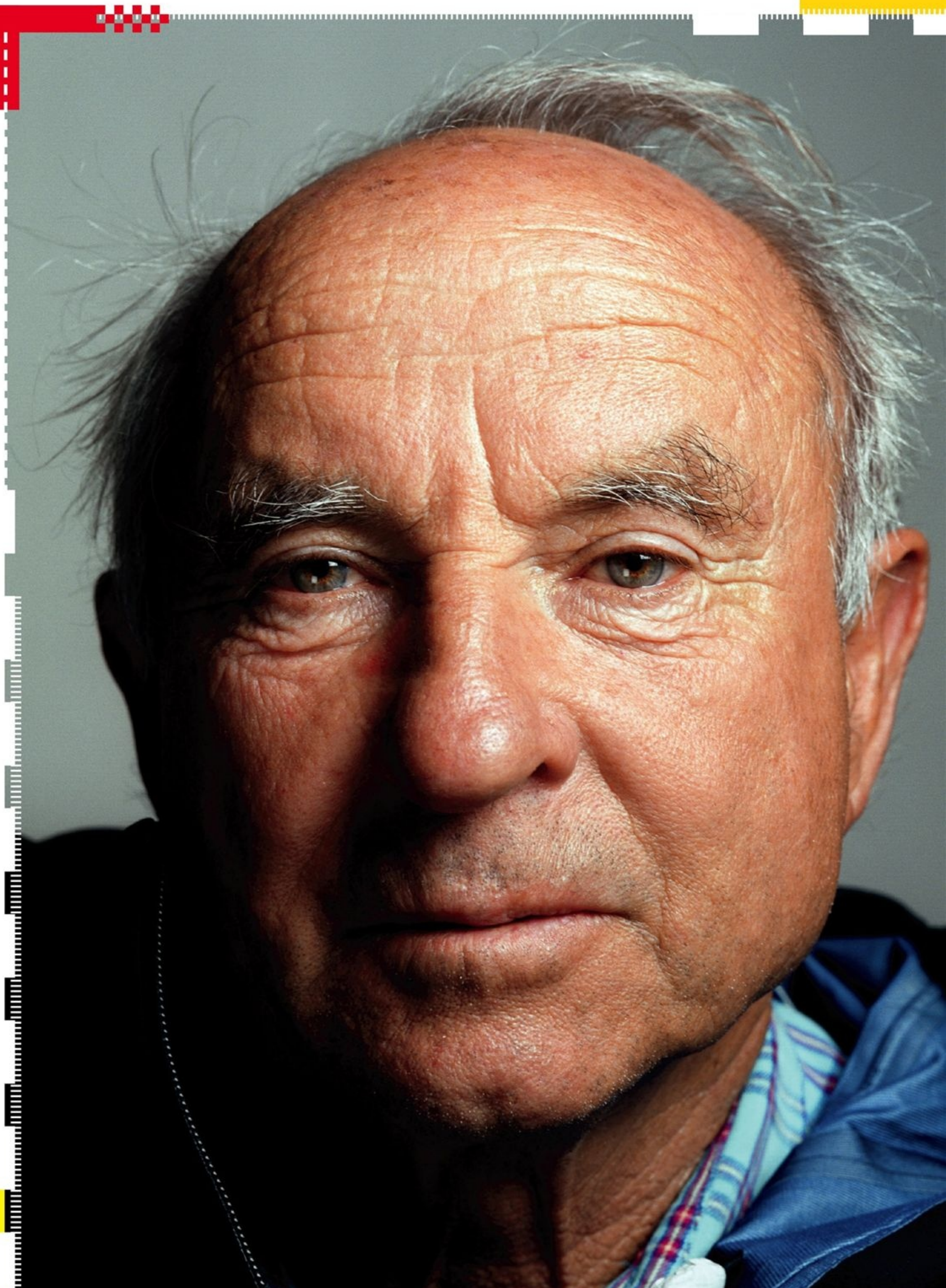
Agricultural & Cattle Futures		Price*	Change
Corn ◆	Mar	702.25	nc
Wheat ◆	Mar	741.50	nc
Soyabeans ◆	Mar	1431.50	nc

CURRENCIES www.ft.com/currencies

FX - EFFECTIVE INDICES

	Feb 12	Feb 11	Mth ago		Feb 12	Feb 11	Mth ago
Australia	111.5	111.5	112.5	Sweden	88.5	88.2	86.9

SELECTED BY JENNIFER RYAN JONES



THE ACCIDENTAL CAPITALIST

HE TELLS PEOPLE NOT TO BUY HIS PRODUCTS. HE DOESN'T SHOW UP AT WORK FOR MONTHS AT A TIME. NO WONDER YVON CHOUINARD IS AMERICA'S MOST UNCONVENTIONAL CEO

It's not easy to get ahold of Yvon Chouinard, the legendary climber, adventurer and founder of Patagonia, the wildly successful apparel company headquartered in Ventura, California. He's 74 years old, fit, rich and very cranky about the destructive smudge humans continue to lay on the planet. His efforts to mitigate the damage by making his company and others ecologically responsible have cast him as the Galahad of the green revolution. And it turns out, saving the environment is a good excuse to be out in it: Chouinard spends six months a year out of touch around the world—wherever the surf is good and the fish are biting.

+ BY CRAIG VETTER

"We haven't seen him in five months," said his assistant when I called. "He's off surfing and fishing somewhere. He doesn't own a cell phone. There's no way to get in touch with him."

I met Chouinard 30 years ago in Moose, Wyoming at his house—a log cabin with a chimney made of river rocks set in a way that allowed his then eight-year-old son and three-year-old daughter to learn to climb to the top. I spent three days there with Yvon and his wife, Malinda, whom he met during an argument over a Yosemite campsite. We talked about his days in that famous cathedral of rocks where he and a ragtag gang of lost boys authored the first climbs of El Capitan, Half Dome and other famous monoliths in the valley. It was there, out of the trunk of his Chevy, that he used a portable forge to hammer out pitons for his climber friends, his first business.

I still had the number for the cabin, and I dialed it on the off chance that I might catch him there. He doesn't own an answering machine, so it rang till I gave up. I phoned half a dozen times over the next two weeks, until one afternoon in September Malinda answered and called Yvon to the phone. He was stopping there for a week before heading to New Haven for a panel at Yale University to discuss his new book, *The Responsible Company*. Then he was off to fish in Canada for a month. We made a date to meet in early November in Ventura.

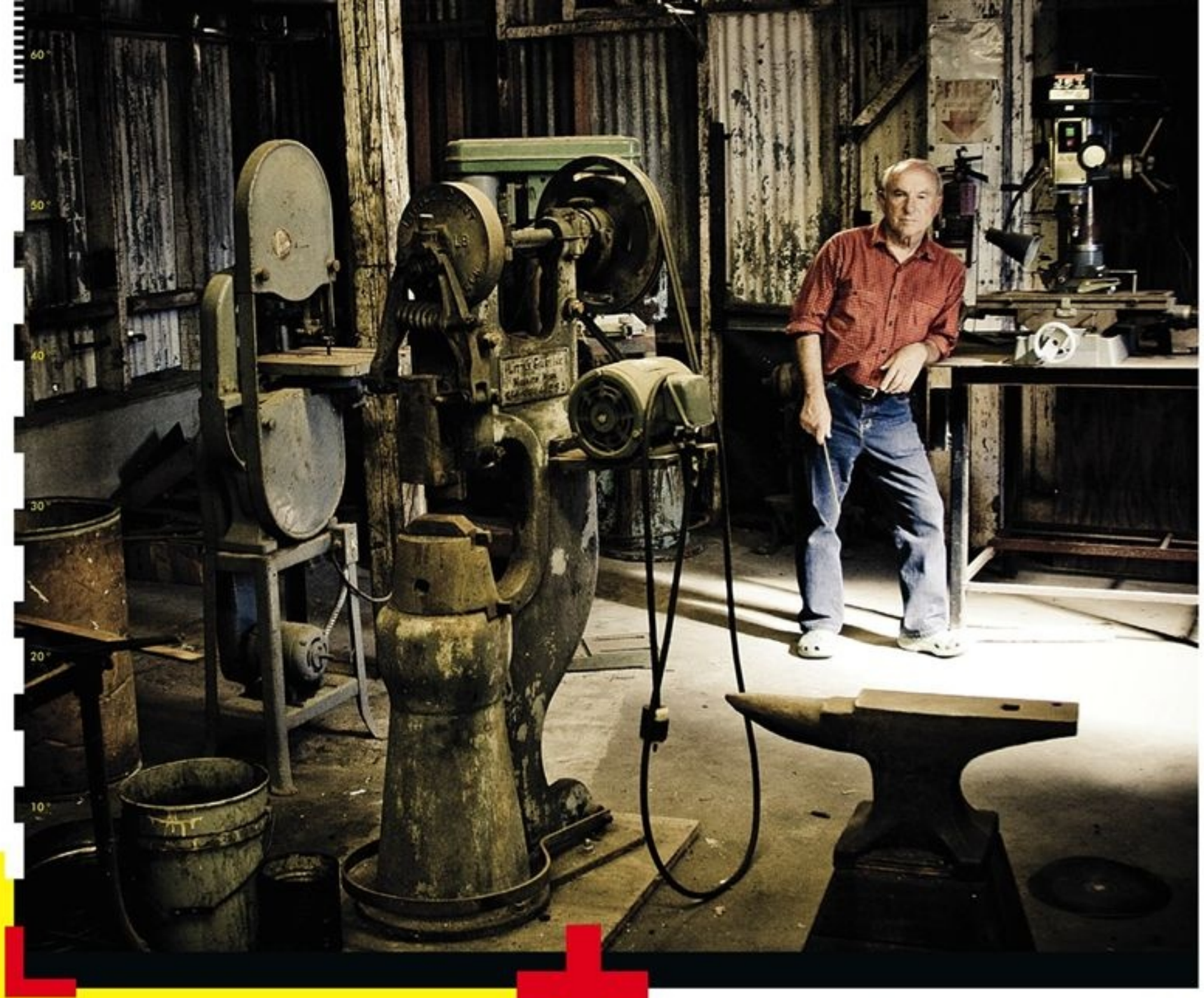
•

The Yale appearance took place in a wood-paneled theater-style classroom that held 500 adoring students. They watched

+ PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN BAKER/REDUX PICTURES

as a moderator introduced Chouinard, who was wearing a travel-anywhere Patagonia sports coat, one of more than 600 products the company manufactures and sells. Also on the panel was the book's co-author, 61-year-old Vincent Stanley, novelist, poet and marketing director of Patagonia. He is also Chouinard's nephew, and his face, though less sun-weathered, bears a resemblance.

This wasn't Chouinard's first trip to Yale. In 1995 its school of forestry awarded him an honorary doctor of humane letters degree for his work on many eco projects. When he received the letter announcing the award, he was cranky as usual, but



"I LOVE RECESSIONS. DURING THIS LAST RECESSION WE'VE NEVER HAD SUCH GROWTH."

+ ABOVE: "I hate the word *sustainable,*" Chouinard told a Yale audience. "*Responsible* is the word I use.... We're not citizens anymore, we're consumers. We don't have to stop being consumers; we just have to become better consumers." **+ RIGHT:** The tin shed he rented in 1966 to build mountaineering equipment still stands on the Patagonia campus.

his response was tinged with the wry humor that often accompanies his crankiness.

"They didn't know what to give me because I didn't have a degree in anything. So when they said humane letters I told them I didn't even like humans. It was really just a smart remark."

A smart remark, sort of, but with an undercurrent of cynicism evinced by the fact that he will tell you evil is stronger than good.

"I still believe that," he says. "Whether or not it's true it's a good way to think. It keeps you from getting hit in the back of the head. Like I've said, if you want to do good, you actually have to do something. Good doesn't just happen; evil does, without your doing anything. It's all around us. In sports, for instance, you're always being pulled to cheat, to make it easier to get one up on somebody else, whether you're doping or using extra-sticky rubber on your climbing shoes. You have to resist it, and if you want to do good you actually have to act."

He has designed his company to be an ongoing act for good, and the book he and Stanley were at Yale to discuss is a detailed blueprint for bringing companies toward the Patagonia model: a laid-back, committed and enlightened approach to corporate consciousness that brought the company $600 million in sales last year. Patagonia has 1,500 employees worldwide and 900 applicants for every job. It's been described as more of a movement than a business.

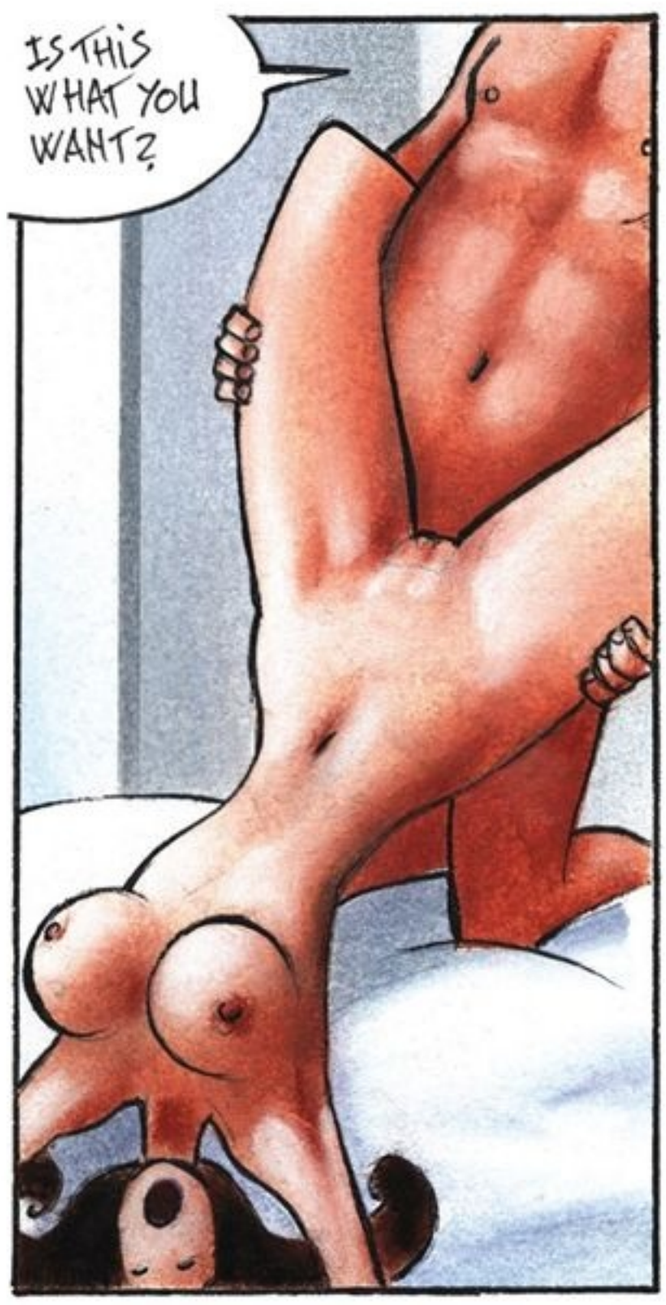
The Responsible Company includes chapters on pay and benefits, transparency about products' social and environmental impact, energy use and reducing toxins, a point Stanley illustrated by holding up his ring finger: "To make a wedding ring generates 20 tons of mine waste," he said. The second half of the book contains guidelines that detail how companies can move toward the corporate responsibility that Chouinard champions with the evangelical energy of a tent preacher.

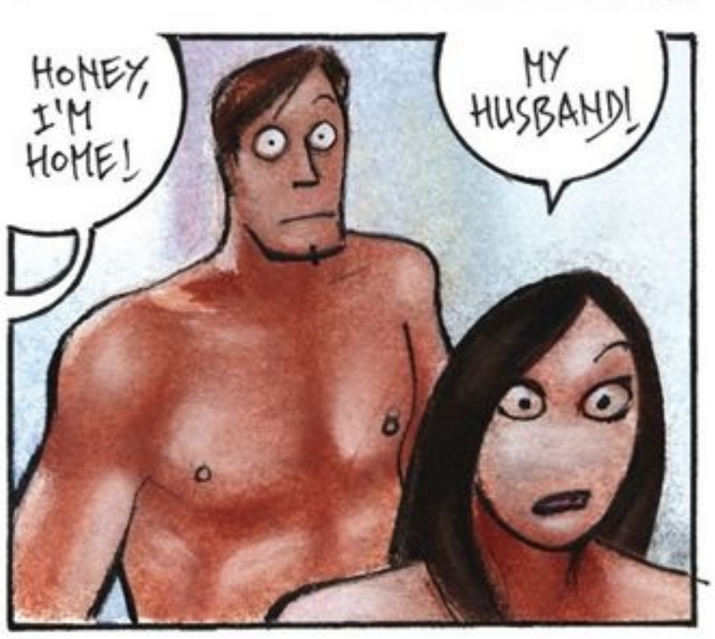
"I hate the word *sustainable,*" he told the audience. "*Responsible* is the word I use. Society is always pushing us to exceed our resources. We're not citizens anymore, we're consumers. We don't have to stop being consumers; we just have to become better consumers."

To make the point, on Black Friday in November 2011 the company had run an ad in *The New York Times* that featured a photo of a Patagonia coat and the headline DON'T BUY THIS JACKET. It was part of a partnership called Common Threads, which urges customers to buy only what they need and promises to fix or recycle whatever wears out or is unusable.

Regarding the weak economy, Chouinard told the students, "I love recessions. During this last recession *(continued on page 128)*

Running in the Rain





Dr. Oz ve Sözcükler

TAMARA ECCLESTONE

A private affair with the "Billion $$ Girl," the dashing daughter of Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone

In the U.K., Tamara Ecclestone is known as the Billion $$ Girl. She's famous as a television presenter, a dashing reality-TV star and heiress to an auto-racing fortune. (Her father, Bernie, is the U.K.'s 12th-richest man, according to *Forbes,* and the CEO of Formula One, the world's most lucrative and popular racing circuit.) Tamara is also famous for her jet-setting, her nights out on the town in London, her recent engagement to a stockbroker boyfriend—all delicious tabloid fodder.

So aside from these photos, what else should Americans know about her? "Every time I come here," Tamara says, "people say to me, 'Oh, you're the European Paris Hilton.'" She wrinkles her nose. "I'm the opposite of that." Tamara says she hits the clubs only one night a week. Her focus is on launching lifestyle businesses in the future. "I know I'm never going to be as successful as my dad," she says, "but I get bored doing nothing. I couldn't go from vacation to vacation and have no motivation."

Tamara, dressed in pink polka-dot pajamas, is sitting on a couch in her deluxe suite at the Peninsula hotel in Beverly Hills. Outside her room are multiple layers of private security, dramatically raising the hotel's quotient of wireless earpieces and glowering expressions.

BY GAVIN EDWARDS

In Los Angeles, Tamara would ordinarily stay with her sister Petra, who bought Aaron Spelling's mansion two years ago for $85 million—with more than a hundred rooms, it probably has enough space. The best thing about her sister's house? "Probably her bowling alley," Tamara says. "Visiting her, I've gotten really good at bowling." But today Petra is back in London, so Tamara will have to wait for another trip to pick up that spare.

So why is she posing for PLAYBOY? For one thing, to please millions of our readers around the globe. "I don't have a problem with nakedness," she says cheerfully. Her mother, Slavica, is a beautiful former fashion model from Croatia who did her share of nude shoots back in the day. "She'd be a bit of a hypocrite if she told me not to," Tamara says.

Tamara's valuable skin has some discreet tattoos (so discreet, in fact, that you can't see them here). The most meaningful is a Marilyn Monroe quote: "Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together." She also has a tattoo of her own name inside a tiara. What's up with that?

"People always joke that I'm a princess," she says, flashing her billion-dollar smile. "I thought I'd make the joke first."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY KELLY

BUSINESS

Fashion stylist
Emma Trask at Opus Beauty

Hair
Mitch Stone for Cloutier Remix using Mitch Stone Essentials

Makeup
Mario Dedivanovic

Manicure
Emi Kudo at Opus Beauty using OPI

Prop stylist
David Ross at ArtMix Beauty

Rolls-Royce Corniche convertible
provided by Charles Agapiou Ltd.

GRINGO LOCO

(continued from page 60)

hoping this nightmare will dissipate in the light of morning.

No such luck. In the light of morning, Rigo still wants to kill the guy. He calls his cousin Demente, a hit man who shows up with an extra Glock. Rigo says, *I'll talk to the guy, but I'll probably shoot him.* And Demente holds out the gun to the Gringo.

This is it, the point of no return. If the Gringo doesn't take the gun, his brief, improbable career as a white American in a Mexican cartel is over.

Let's do it, he says.

The Gringo from Portland is going to war.

•

Before he went to Mexico, the Gringo was an athletic kid from a prosperous American family with two beach houses. Life was good until he was 11, when his parents divorced and his mother married a much younger man, leaving the Gringo with a fatherless ache that lasted all through his teen years. But he poured his energy into sports and never took illegal drugs till he was 23. He made all-state in high school and got a football scholarship to Portland State, where he picked up a bachelor's degree in communication and a painkiller habit. His biggest rebellion was a taste for Latin American revolutionary history. After college he found work as a high school football coach.

He's telling this story at his mother's house in Portland. He's been back from Mexico for two and a half months, found a job doing telemarketing from a sterile cubicle and taking shit from a snotty boss, and he's trying to sort out his feelings. Should he go straight? Should he go back to the cartel? *You get burned if you stand by the fire,* he says, *but who wants to be cold?*

His dilemma began soon after he graduated from college, when he started selling painkillers to pay for his habit. He started to think of himself as an "illegalist," his term for a revolutionary without a revolution. He read Mao and Castro and Chomsky and Kropotkin, cultivating *a rage against a society that is created to keep us from thought and from being happy.*

Three years later everything fell apart. *One of my friends is in a mental institution, one got addicted to heroin, and I introduced them to pills.* He felt so bad, he stopped caring if he lived or died and did reckless things that attracted the attention of the police. So when his mom saw an ad for English teachers in Guadalajara, he jumped at the chance to escape. Emiliano Zapata! Pancho Villa! What better place to clean up than sunny Mexico?

He arrived in October and got a job teaching English at a factory, waking up at 6:30 and catching the train, a period he now thinks of as *the time I was trying to pretend to be a normal person.* But one night, he and another teacher were in a club and a guy came up with a tray of free beer, said he was a hit man from Michoacán who had decided to protect them—and lifted his shirt to flash his gun. The Gringo was fascinated. In the circles he was running in, narcos were Robin Hoods who battled the corrupt government and refused to abide by social norms. Ballads memorialized narcos' deaths. What could be cooler?

That November, the same teacher took him to a party in a big house on a tree-lined street near the Expo Guadalajara. The host was a skinny young guy who spoke perfect English. *Call me Rigo,* he said, launching into the fantastic story of his life as a fourth-generation narco. One of his first memories was his dad kicking a hole in the wall and digging out two cases of money and a shotgun. He was eight. Next time they met, he was 16 and his dad gave him an ounce of cocaine for a Christmas present.

Another night in another club, one of the Gringo's friends bought some ecstasy from a guy whose boss then came up to their table. He was in his 30s, a good-looking, relaxed dude, six feet tall, big for a Mexican, with the Buddha belly of a man who loves to drink and party. *Call me Cuz,* he said.

Cuz and the Gringo hit it off. Cuz was funny, an outgoing party guy everybody instantly liked. He grew up in Juárez and loved Americans, was a huge music fan and rave promoter. Soon they were exchanging stories about their backgrounds, and it was amazing because they were both the black sheep of wealthy families with elder brothers who were the favorite. They both loved *Scarface* and *Pulp Fiction* and *American Gangster.* They talked about the bad things they had done and the lives they were destined to live. *You can correct yourself all you want,* Cuz said, *but you're still going to be that person, the person you are.*

That night, Cuz made out like he was a little guy who sold a few pills at raves. *You hang out with these teachers; you could sell to these teachers,* he said, giving the Gringo half an X to try. *Remember, call me tomorrow. Don't forget.*

The Gringo did as he was told.

•

A week later, Cuz called back. *Let's get some beers and go to this little party.* So they gathered some of the Gringo's friends and hopped in a cab and drove till they were 40 miles out of town and starting to get nervous. Suddenly, at the top of a hill, a squad of *federales* appeared. They searched everybody but Cuz, who walked right past them as if he were invisible. The Gringo and his friends followed him over a ridge onto a mountaintop lit up like a nightclub with 5,000 people dancing. A line of gunmen in ski masks stood guard around the perimeter with AR-15s. The Gringo turned to Cuz. *Are those more federales?*

No, those are our dudes.

The Gringo was starting to realize that Cuz was connected in a big way. He walked from one hug and high-five to the next. He seemed to know everybody. He led the Gringo to a tent with heat lamps and black leather couches and beautiful women who all seemed to be wearing big fat gold men's watches—the sign of a narco princess, as the Gringo would soon learn. *You see one of those watches on a girl, you steer clear.*

They were in the narco tent. Famous DJs from Europe chatted nervously with the gangsters, who tended to fall into categories denoted by the drugs they sold—the coke guys were the scariest, dancing like maniacs and giving you that cold coke stare. But the Gringo was oblivious, bopping up to the most dangerous guys and babbling like a goofball. He had a way of twisting his face into comic expressions that contradicted his football body and made him hard to pigeonhole: Was he a thug or an idiot? Not always in a friendly way, the narcos asked, *Who is this guy?*

Cuz wanted them all to take acid. The Gringo had never done hallucinogens before but found it hard to say no. Cuz just laughed at everything. There was no darkness in him, no judgment. Nothing was true, so everything was permitted, as the old Russian anarchists used to say. *Fuck it,* the Gringo said. *Let's do it.* So the sun came up as the acid came on and they were in this beautiful Mexican countryside where everything seemed to fall into place and Cuz seemed like a prophet. The world was divided into good and evil and light and dark, he said, but all divisions were profitable to somebody and it was the same with the cartels dividing the world into families, raising prices in collusion with the cartel of the U.S. government. But some day the world would be one, and all the countries and cartels would go away. That's why Cuz didn't use hit men or deal heroin or speed or crack, because that ruined people's lives. If it was his destiny to be a criminal, he could at least improve his karma by sticking to softer drugs.

If we're dealing coke to a girl, he said, *what will she do? Break into her parents' room and steal money out of her dad's wallet. If she's on X, she sneaks into her dad's room to give him a hug.*

Oh, how they laughed! In the Gringo's mind, it all made perfect sense, as if his whole life had been leading up to this moment. Stuck between being a bad son and a good son, he could make up for the sins of selling those horrible painkillers and getting his friends addicted and still follow his illegalist destiny. He could have *a stretch of lawlessness in a place where lawlessness still exists.* In his addled mind, it was a strange kind of self-improvement program that might finally purge his suicidal impulses. His Che Guevara quote tattoo said it all: *We cannot be sure of having anything to live for unless we're willing to die for it.*

Still, the good son had to teach the next day. So Cuz walked him down to a little mom-and-pop stand to catch the bus back to Guadalajara. While they waited,

"Wait, isn't <u>he</u> the one who's supposed to shake his finger at me and go 'Tsk, tsk'?"

Cuz turned his wild-eyed grin on the cashier. *I'm on acid right now,* he said.

The cashier smiled. *The 1970s are back—nice.*

•

Cuz started him off at a high price, $7 a pill, supplying acid, X and molly, which is X so pure you can snort it or put it under your tongue. The molly sold for $15 each. The Gringo could make $400 in a single night, almost as much as he earned for a whole month of teaching. He also started hanging out with Cuz a couple of days a week, helping him sort and package pills and move money from place to place.

Soon after, his mom came down for the holidays, and Cuz took them out to lunch at a fancy Argentine steak place. She asked, *Is Mexico safe?* Cuz said, *Oh, don't worry; we're just getting rid of all the dirt balls, rapists and killers to make a better society.* They hit it off, even became Facebook friends, and that helped seal the Gringo's bond with Cuz, because Mexico is all about family. He didn't tell his mom that 18 headless bodies had just been found a mile from her hotel.

By January he had stopped teaching altogether. He worked parties and gay clubs and hung out with hot French girls. He was their peek into the glamorous narco lifestyle—*a dancing bear,* as he puts it.

But more and more, he found himself hanging out with Rigo. Talk about an illegalist! Rigo would walk out of a club and shoot his gun in the air. He would fire off a couple of rounds at the front door instead of ringing the doorbell. He had been a meth addict, a heroin addict, a professional killer who took payment in cars. He never judged and never criticized, accepting the craziest behavior with a laugh and a shrug. *I always like having people around who are crazier than I am.* More important, he was the dauphin of a powerful cartel family, and as long as he was around, nobody would touch them—as the Gringo learned one night when he got into a club dispute with a thug who threatened to slit his throat. He went straight home and called Rigo.

This fucking guy from Sinaloa threatened to kill me, he said.

Don't worry, Rigo said. They'd have to get permission to hit a white guy and his uncle would hear about it. *I'll put the word out; nothing will happen.*

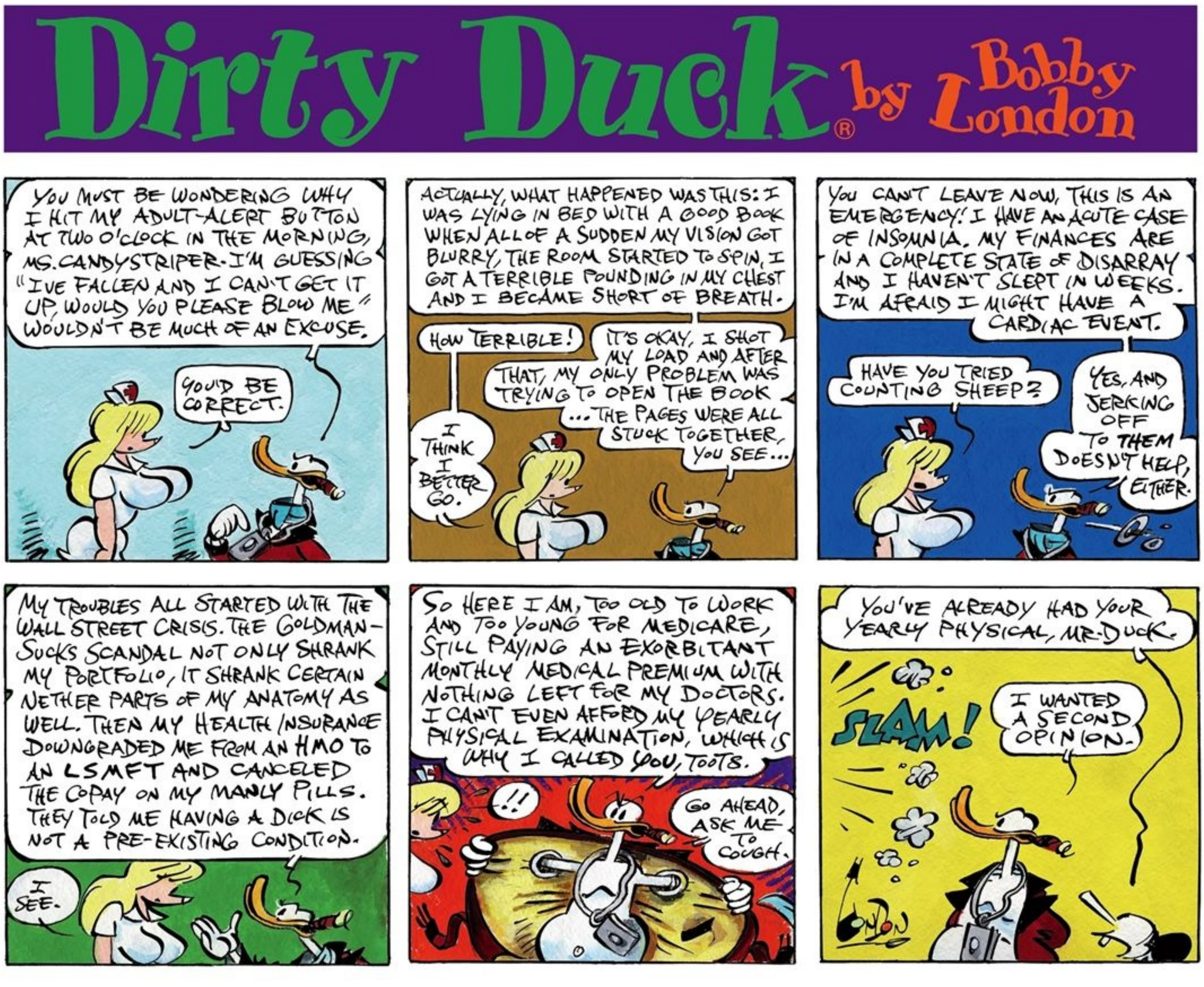
And nothing did.

•

Around March, the Gringo moved in with Rigo. Their housemates included a Satanist death-metal fan who had been arrested for manslaughter, the burned-out son of another powerful family and a hot-dog salesman who doubled as muscle in dangerous times. There were bullet holes in the palm trees and rumors of bodies buried in the backyard, left by a former owner who led one of the cartels. They called it the House of Pain, and the Gringo made it his mission to turn it into the Happy House. To Rigo, he was a minty blast of American optimism.

For the first month, they did a lot of coke. People would come by, drink a beer, buy some pills. Or they'd go to one of the nightclubs Rigo's uncle owned, hanging out in a private lounge with bottles of champagne and Johnnie Walker Black, the narcos' favorite drink. Rigo's uncle would come by with his fancy watch and $300 shoes and give them a big bag of *lavada,* the narco drug of choice, coke double-washed to clean out the chemicals. It had no bite and didn't make you hunger for more, just lifted you up on a waft of soft air and deposited you in a fluffy cloud—and it smelled like strawberries.

Hour after hour Rigo would explain the business. Somebody always runs the plaza, which is sometimes an actual plaza and sometimes just a part of town. Rigo knew



how much things cost, how to move things, how things worked in the U.S. and what groups you needed to make alliances with. He taught the Gringo how to recognize other narcos, the flashy ones who wore designer sunglasses and glittery shirts and the kind who looked like skate punks. Almost always they carried three phones: one for the boss, one for the customers and one for the family. And you have to know your history, he said. The narcos get offended when you don't know the history of Mexico or the cartels.

The management of violence had a single rigid rule: If they lay their hands on you, come back tenfold. That's how Rigo's cousin was killed. He set up a meeting between two guys who were fighting, and one of the guys slapped the other guy. The guy who was slapped killed the guy who slapped him and then killed Rigo's cousin just for setting up the meeting. So Rigo and his hit-man cousin Demente had no choice. They burst into the man's home and killed him along with his entire family.

After that, Rigo went out of control. His uncle was dropping off kilos of crystal and Rigo was such a good cleaner he could save a tenth of the product, which he smoked. He got so paranoid he spent half his time in his room with his gun. He cheated on his wife and she left with their three kids. Finally his uncle came to him and said, *You're skinny; you don't look so good. I hate to see you like this. I'm not going to do business with you till you clean up.*

Rigo got a job as a bellhop, got fired and got another job and got fired again. And another. And another. Finally his uncle called and said, *What are you planning on doing?*

I want to do whatever you want me to do and gain your trust back, Rigo answered.

That's why Rigo was so obsessed with the rules he was always breaking. Under his training, the Gringo felt militarized. They were soldiers in a war, brothers in arms, and nothing in his white-bread American life had ever felt so real.

•

All that winter the Gringo continued to work as Cuz's sidekick. Sometimes Cuz would say, *You want to make some money, just drive this down the street.* One time he drove 15,000 pills to a guy's house. Once, Cuz came out with a black bag the size of a loaf of bread, a million pesos in small bills. Cuz made it all seem like a rolling party, blasting his beats on the car radio. *You hear this part? You hear this part?*

One day Cuz was flipping through a magazine called *Proceso* and he came to a picture of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, leader of the Sinaloa cartel and a billionaire who has appeared on *Forbes* magazine's list of the world's richest men. He asked, *What do you think about this guy?*

I don't know what to think, the Gringo said.

He'll fuck you over, but he has a big heart, Cuz said. *He'll fuck you over if you need to be fucked over.*

That was the first hint that the Gringo's chain of command ultimately stopped with El Chapo himself. The next hint came from another regular at Rigo's house, a volatile 39-year-old gangster named Roberto who dated an Argentinean stripper and loved to talk about killing people. *If I was having lunch with your mom,* he said with an evil grin, *I would tell her, "He's with Chapo now."*

So the Gringo was working for the Sinaloa cartel, the most powerful drug-trafficking organization in the world. So be it, he thought. He had come to see everything through the eyes of his friends, whom he loved for their loyalty and straightforward, no-bullshit way of living. The other cartels were the dickheads. Worst of all were Los Zetas, a cartel from southern Mexico that was making a big push on Guadalajara and the north. *They use a lot of poor people to do their shit, guys from the projects, Central American guys, guys who are willing to kill for nothing.* Chapo ran the good cartel. *He buys things for people and helps with public works projects and stuff.* To this day, the Gringo always calls Cuz "my boss," and it's hard not to hear an echo of the fatherless son in his voice.

But the sane part of him, the part that wanted to live, started to live in fear. At one of the mountain parties, he saw a guy hit on one of the narco princesses and get dragged out into the night by two big guys, never to be seen again. At another Cuz was in the narco tent, chatting with a former MMA fighter, when the Gringo looked too long at his girlfriend and made a joke about his fighting skills. *Are you challenging me?* the MMA fighter asked. The tension lasted all through the long night. And Rigo's house kept getting crazier. One guy named Manuel was so out of control they'd put Xanax in his drink to calm him down. One time he opened the refrigerator and pissed in one of the drawers, so they beat him up and threw him in the street. An hour later he came stumbling back. Rigo said, *I'm sorry I hit you, but you can't piss in the fridge.*

Manuel looked confused. *I pissed in the fridge?*

By the night the mirror came crashing down, when Rigo roared his war cry and the Gringo made his decision to take the gun, all this seemed almost normal. They prepared for the gunfight by doing coke and listening to heavy metal for 10 hours. That made perfect sense too. When they finally got to the projects, it was three in the morning and the Gringo was so wired he pissed on a gang sign and shouted, *Come out, motherfuckers. We're here.*

The coke dealer appeared with 10 buddies. They fanned out behind him as Rigo walked up to the guy, his nine in his back pocket. The Gringo moved his hand over his piece, ready to draw.

For a long moment life and death hung in the balance.

Finally the dealer stepped forward and held out his right hand. *I'm so sorry,* he said.

He had discovered who Rigo's uncle was, and he was scared to the point of shaking. That's when the Gringo finally had a flash of sanity. *What the fuck am I doing here? How did I get into this?* But it passed quickly as they left in triumph, Rigo and Demente laughing at the crazy Gringo pissing on the gang sign. *El Gringo es loco,* said Demente—

high praise from a guy whose nickname translates as "insane."

As a reward for his service, Rigo revealed his real last name. *From now on, bro, you are family.* "La Flama Blanca" was no longer enough. The crazy white boy from Portland deserved a new name: El Gringo Loco.

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All that summer, protected by Rigo's name, El Gringo Loco worked a circuit of three beach towns—Manzanillo, Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita. By now he was paying $4 a pill and selling them for $25 each. He quit drinking and cut back on X and even looked into a job selling time-shares at inflated prices but decided it was too dishonest. *You get a pill from me and it's a good pill and you pay the same price everyone is paying. Taking money from people in a fraud, I couldn't fucking do it.*

That's the paradox he still can't get over. In Portland he might have done it. But in this world where violence settled disputes, the Bob Dylan rule applied: To live outside the law you must be honest.

But the paranoia got worse. At night his mind would go to the worst thoughts—torture, death, dismemberment, dishonor. One night in Sayulita he was selling in a bar and a guy with a pit bull took him into a back room, where a group of men were waiting for him. The boss pointed a finger at him and pulled an imaginary trigger. *You need to leave—you need to leave now.* Another night in Puerto Vallarta a Zeta chieftain cornered him in a restaurant. *I know where your fucking pills come from, man. You shouldn't be working here. This is past your border.* Another night he was at a party, and Roberto announced, *This is the boss from the dragonflies. This is the distributor.* He was pointing at the Gringo. The problem was, dragonflies were a superior brand of X controlled by another cartel. The Gringo wasn't supposed to be selling them.

Shut the fuck up, he told Roberto. *You're going to get me killed.*

Roberto gave him the cold eye. *You're lucky you're my friend.*

The beautiful girl who gave blow jobs for X was no consolation. To get his mind off his troubles the Gringo started to write poetry. *I need to get the crazy out of my life,* he thought.

Instead, he moved back into Rigo's house for the three craziest months of his life, partying his way into narco legend.

•

In November it all came crashing down. Cuz sent him to Mexico City with 10 kilos of weed and he came back with 50,000 pesos in his pocket, and no sooner did he arrive back at Rigo's house than he ran into a phalanx of cops. *Hey, gringo, we need to see ID.*

A year had passed since he started the narco life. The cops searched him and found the money. *What the fuck is this?* He put on an innocent face. *That's my rent.* The cops searched further and found an X. *What the fuck is this?* He said, *Guys, these aren't my jeans.* They cuffed him and put him in the car. From the backseat he tried to make a deal. *Take half the money and we call it a day.*

No deal.

Still afraid to give his real name, he pretended to be German and demanded a translator. That pissed the cops off so much, they sent him to one of the most notorious prisons in Mexico, Puente Grande. On the bus another prisoner warned him, *Gringo, you better get ready. These guys don't play.*

Walking in, he was shaking inside. They put him in a tiny cell with six other men. The showers didn't work; you had to pay for your food, phone calls, weed—that's all they did in prison, smoke weed. He found his way to a neutral area called Beverly Hills and made friends with some cholos, who saved his ass when he got into a fight with another narco. Finally Rigo called his mom, and his mom found Cuz on Facebook and they hired a lawyer, who got him transferred to an immigration prison to wait for his papers. It took 17 days. One day a guy from Honduras brought up the Zetas, and El Gringo Loco couldn't help repeating the Sinaloa line: *Their own mothers don't love them.*

Yo soy los Zetas, the Honduran said. After a tense moment, the Gringo twisted his face into one of his goofy expressions and cracked a joke. *Oh, but I don't know any from Honduras.*

Laughter saved him once again. The next day he was on a plane back to Portland.

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Now he's going back to Mexico. It has been 10 weeks since he was deported, and he's already sick of his cubicle job. He's sitting in his mother's elegant suburban house, skimming the internet for news about Guadalajara, where a cartel prince called El Changel just got wounded in a gun battle with police, unleashing violence all over western Mexico. Still, he thinks it's a fine time to slip back down for one more taste of the narco life. The complication is, he's bringing a reporter who looks alarmingly like a DEA agent—me. Hopefully his friends won't think he got turned in prison.

The night before he leaves he sends me this message:

I feel nervous, good and excited, mostly nervous. I mean, I trust my people, but these are killers—if I was not nervous then I suppose I would need to check my pulse. I did not sleep well last night, I have to get my war face on. In the end I am a soldier and I have trained myself for this. I have said good-bye to my friends, and if I go then it has been a hell of a ride. I get to go from being a normal white guy who works a nine-to-five and stands in line at the grocery store to a man who is feared, respected and loved. I look forward to it with an absurd amount of excitement. In the end I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees.

After his plane lands, the Gringo meets me in a hotel lobby. *I can't believe I'm back here,* he says. *It's definitely not a world I want to come back to.*

But he's going to go see Cuz tonight to get some acid and X and do a few little deals. And Rigo is coming over in a few minutes—in fact, there he is now, just as the Gringo described him, a skinny, good-looking guy who looks about 25, if 25 were as sad as 70. He's tweaked out on something, fanning his neck and impatient to go see a hostess who used to be a narco wife—yes, she has a gold watch. *A nice one,* the Gringo says.

Rigo doesn't care. He's supposed to meet her in eight minutes. No, seven minutes. And man, what an ass she has. *She's sitting on it.*

They drain their beers and go.

The scariest part is the anticipation of meeting Cuz for the first time. The cartels *really* don't like journalists—according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, they've beheaded, tortured and shot at least 45 of them in the past seven years. Many more have disappeared.

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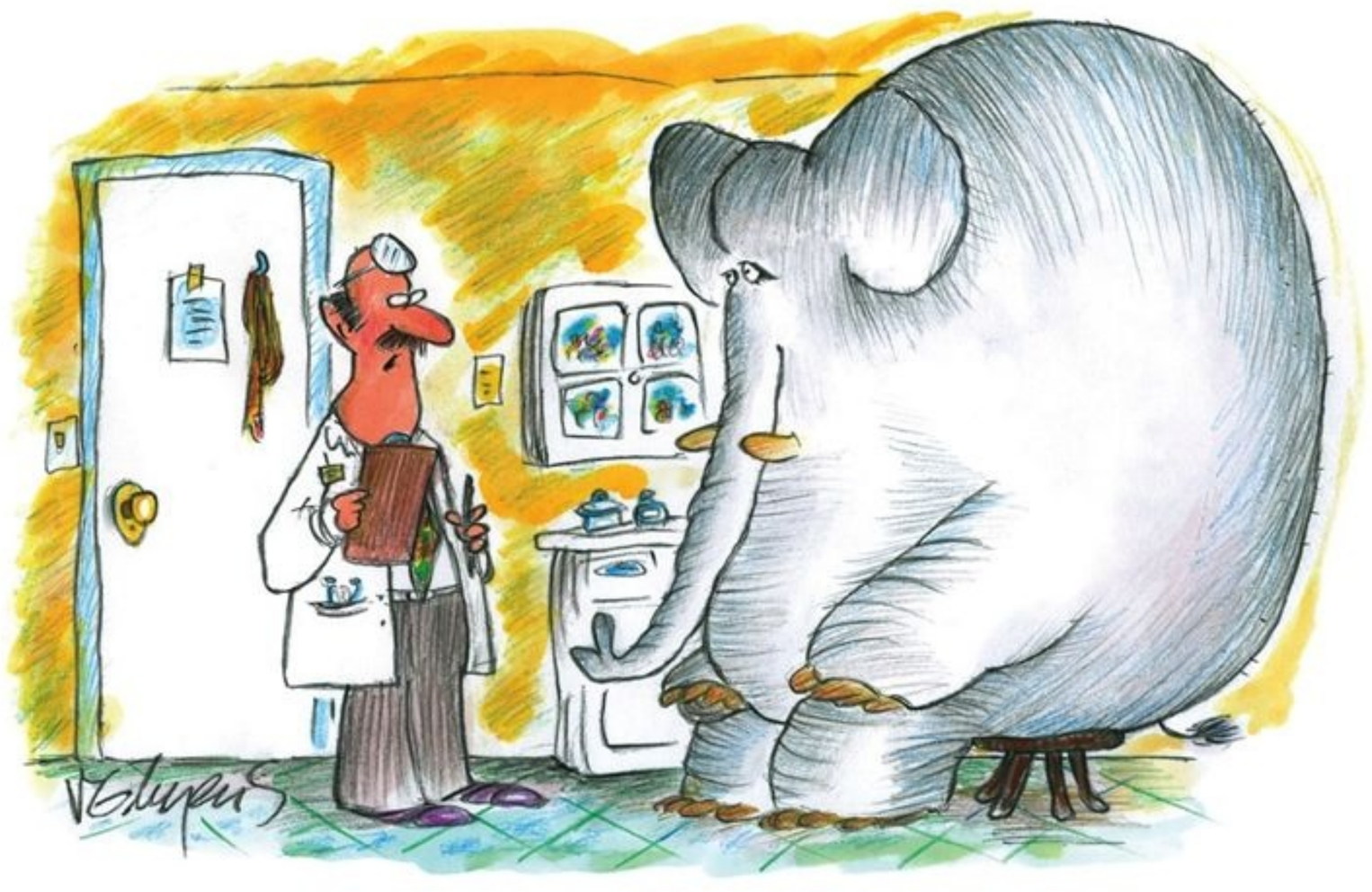
The next afternoon the Gringo takes me to Rigo's house. This too is just as he described it, a two-story place on a pretty, tree-lined street. Inside it's just raw walls and a couple of sofas around a glass coffee table, some weights against a wall, a brown lawn out back. Rigo points out a big hole



"I hate to tell you this, but you've got a peanut allergy."

where a friend shot the wall. The doors have all been kicked in; not a single one closes properly. Out back they show off the bullet holes in the trees.

Odd as it may be, Rigo really does seem like a sweet guy, eager to like and be liked. Maybe that's why he starts telling his backstory, his teen years cleaning meth and the lessons his father taught him: *It's better to have a gun and not use it than to need a gun and not have it,* for example. Each story has sub-stories and punch lines to illustrate the ridiculous glory of narco life. Over and over he insists the narcos are good people and kill only people who need to be killed—except the Zetas, of course.

When we part that night, Rigo pushes a button on his dashboard and then another button to release a secret compartment—in some narco cars you have to tune the radio to a certain station before you push the buttons. Inside is a space that spans the width of the car, big enough for 40 kilos. He takes out a bag of X and hands it to the Gringo—to El Gringo Loco.

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Saturday, Rigo and the Gringo head downtown for some six-peso tacos. Rigo's already on his second or third beer of the day. Every few minutes he spots some hot girl. *Look at that ass. She's sitting on it!* Walking toward the city's big open-air market, they stop for Cuban cigars and some gifts for the Gringo's nieces. At the taco stand Rigo brings up the guy who shot his cousin. *We killed his whole family, just walked into the house and started shooting.*

In the same detached voice, he says he killed one of them from about as far away as those poles across the street. *It's not like the movies. You pull the trigger and he falls down. There's no blood.*

How does he carry that around? *No problem,* he answers. *I had nightmares for a couple of weeks, but they were about my cousin dying alone in the street. I don't have any remorse.*

Cuz calls and the Gringo is already laughing by the time he picks up the phone. They make plans to meet at a steakhouse so he can introduce me. Before the Gringo hangs up, he asks, *Do you have any wash?* Meaning *lavada,* the double-washed strawberry cocaine of the narcos. *Great, bring me some. Yeah, I got the money.*

A few more hours, a few more beers, and it's time to meet the boss. At the steakhouse they get a table in the back and shoot the shit until he shows up—a big guy with a small forehead and a Fred Flintstone jaw darkened by a five-o'clock shadow. His girlfriend is a green-eyed beauty with major cleavage and skintight leatherette pants. After some teasing about Cuz's Polish soccer jersey—*I just bought it to go with my shoes; I didn't even look at the logo*—the Gringo asks if he brought the wash. Cuz hands over a little plastic bag filled with white powder, and the Gringo turns aside to take a quick snort off the tip of Rigo's ignition key. *Nobody saw me, did they?* Cuz says, *Yes, they saw you.* He thinks it's funny.

After lunch we walk out of the restaurant with beers in our hands. A waitress stops us, so we chug down in the doorway and head for the car. Another bump off the ignition key for everyone and we're off, following Cuz's black SUV—leaving the safety of a public place, putting our lives in his hands. Adrenaline mixes with the cocaine, and every nerve is thrumming with a heightened sense of being alive. *There's the club where I shot off the gun,* Rigo says. *There's the doorway where my cousin got killed.*

Cuz leads us to a house in a suburban neighborhood with a pool and a bunch of attractive people drinking, an oddly domestic scene with a little kid running around the pool and five narcos huddling across the yard. There's a mountain party tonight, and they're partying here until it starts. The narcos slip outside to smoke a little dope, slip into the bathroom to snort the *lavada.* Cuz wants everyone to stay cool so they can make it to the mountain party tonight.

Standing behind his boss, the Gringo shakes his head—*Please, God, no.* Cuz always wants to hang out in the narco tent, and you're stuck out there in the middle of nowhere with all those guns—no thanks. But he doesn't say this to his boss.

Cuz doesn't take anything too seriously. His family is so rich, he says, that his older brother, the chosen one, is one of the five biggest landowners in Mexico. When Cuz's father dies, he'll inherit a fortune. So he keeps his business low-key, running the pill market in Guadalajara and on the coast. As long as he sticks to pills and avoids the cocaine and meth other families control, he's all right.

"In the end I am a soldier and I have trained myself for this," says El Gringo Loco. "I have said good-bye to my friends, and if I go then it has been a hell of a ride."

And El Gringo Loco? Why him? Was it his white skin? His brains? His twisted sense of humor?

He's my little brother, Cuz says.

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After a couple of hours the Gringo, brimming with relief, says good-bye. Bro-hugs all around, plus promises to stay relatively straight and rise at dawn for the second phase of the mountain party—Cuz is a hard guy to say no to.

Now the real party begins. We head downtown to the club district, and man, is it hopping. The streets are jammed with sexy young women tottering by in high heels and short, tight skirts. Rigo leads the way into an American-style bar, and the shaggy young bartender spots the Gringo, comes around the bar to greet him with open arms. *Where the fuck have you been?* He gives them free beers and shots and after a while takes the Gringo into the bathroom to do a little deal. The Gringo loves the action, it is clear, loves being the American all the Mexicans want to see. He says he's thinking of doing six months in the U.S. and six months down here. *You should come down for spring break,* Rigo says. *Yeah, that's when the six months would start.*

There's a stubborn core deep in that skinny body of Rigo's that just doesn't give a shit about living. It's oddly endearing. He wants to get healthy and be good but deep down can't believe that he deserves it, so he protects and punishes himself with booze and drugs and lays his neck bare to the knife of existence—which is, when you think about it, pretty much how you'd want a man who has killed 15 people to feel.

Outside, the Gringo sighs. *You see how he is.*

Never mind. The night goes on. Another cerveza. Another snort. The true El Gringo Loco is coming out now, sliding free in the haze of intoxicants. On the great avenue of trees and fountains called Lopez Mateos there's a street party with a reggae band, and the crowd is like Times Square on New Year's Eve. One of Rigo's girls shows up—very pretty and sweet—and then it's on to a rock club called Barramericano, where a good band is playing the Strokes note for note, then on to his uncle's club with the pretty girl driving.

Here we are at one of the best clubs in Guadalajara. *Do you want to go through the front door or the narco door?* Rigo asks.

The narco door, of course. It's black steel with a little speakeasy barred window and opens wide for Rigo. Everyone's so happy to see him. Inside the club is huge and packed with beautiful women and sharp men and spinning lights and a sound system as fancy and expensive—Rigo says it cost a million bucks—as ones in the best clubs in New York.

Ah, Mexico. El Gringo Loco is in his element now, hitting on the prettiest women. With his massive shoulders and goofy animated face, he *is* the dancing bear, and you can't help but laugh when he shimmies into yet another gaggle of beautiful women. And now Rigo is hitting on a stunning little thing in a skintight micromini while his date waits at the table. *Dude, you already got a hottie right there!* He laughs. *Yeah, but look at that ass. She's sitting on it!*

This goes on till five in the morning. Then Rigo takes his hottie home and drops another X. *Good times,* he says.

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Two days later El Gringo Loco flies back to Portland and his telemarketing cubicle. In the morning he writes this note:

For now, I will try the "normal" life and see how it fits. I will try to laugh at the guy who talks shit to me at the club, listen to my boss belittle me in front of my employees and remember this is not Mexico and I can't just call one of my friends to teach him his final lesson. The days of El Gringo Loco are done....

Then, thinking again of Mexico, glorious tragic Mexico, where the women are beautiful and life is sweetened by the presence of death, he adds a final line:

But never say never....

Names have been changed to protect the reporter.

CANNIBAL

(continued from page 68)

Because when this school grades you on Participation they mean: Do you take your share of the social rejects? And when they grade you on Sportsmanship, they mean: Do you marginalize the differently abled? Because of that, the captain of the Red Team shouts, "We'll spot you 100 points."

Hearing that, the captain of the Blue Team shouts back, "We'll spot you a million."

Cannibal, he thinks he's such a stud because he's just looking at his fingernails, smiling and just smelling his fingers, not even aware of how he's holding everyone hostage. How this is the opposite of a slave auction. And everybody knows what he's thinking. Because of what Marcia Sanders told everybody. Because Cannibal is thinking about a movie that's chopped up in his head, some black-and-white movie he saw on cable TV where hard-boiled waitresses in olden times slung hash in some roadside diner. Because Cannibal's thinking how they popped their chewing gum, these waitresses. They smacked their chewing gum while they yelled, "Gimme slaughter on the pan and let the blood follow the knife." They yelled, "Gimme an order of first lady with a side of nervous pudding."

You knew it was olden times because in diner talk two poached eggs on toast were "Adam and Eve on a raft." And "first lady" meant an order of spareribs because of something from the Bible. An order of just "Eve with a lid on" meant apple pie because of the story about the snake. Because nowadays nobody except Pat Robertson knew anything about the Garden of Eden. Around here, when the captain of the baseball team talks about eating a fur burger he's talking about chowing down on a muff pie, and he's really bragging about his tongue lapping at a blue waffle.

Because girls have their own food too, like when they talked about Marcia Sanders having a bun in the oven, what they meant was she'd missed her red-letter day.

Otherwise most of what he knew about sex Cannibal learned from the Playboy channel, where ladies never rode the cotton pony, so when kids whispered about gobbling a bearded clam or snacking on a meat muffin he knew it meant what the Bunnies do to the Playmates, the same way a rattlesnake flickers its tongue to smell something it plans to bite on Animal Planet.

Because Cannibal had seen those Centerfolds. You know the ones, of an old Miss America drinking from the furry cup. Those dirty pictures of her being a confirmed clam digger, because it was just those two ladies without a single tube steak or bald-headed yogurt slinger standing there to make it a real marriage. Because that's how girls do, sometimes, when their crotch cobbler needs gobbling.

Because nobody ever explained otherwise, he was ready to go neck-deep in Marcia Sanders's jelly hole. Because his dad, old Mr. Cannibal, only ever watched the Playboy channel, and Mrs. Cannibal only liked *The 700 Club,* so it wasn't lost on their boy how sex stuff and Christian stuff looked the same. Because when you turn on cable TV, it never fails. When you tune in and see an almost-beautiful girl almost acting on a set that looks almost realistic, Cannibal knows that her story will end by her being touched by an angel. Either that or she'll get a heaping helping of hot baby gravy sliding down one side of her face.

Because of that, Cannibal was already sporting a Spam javelin when Marcia Sanders looked at him in American Civics one day. No matter how he tries to hide it, his skin is polka dot with goose bumps, because he'd been remembering that hard-boiled diner talk yelled through a little window. The same way Catholics lined up in church to talk dirty through their own little window.

Because no matter how they called it, dirty talk made Cannibal drool. Those words picturing a whisker biscuit like those lunch-meat curtains kids talk about when they really mean a camel toe soufflé.

In middle school when they grade you on Community Spirit, they mean: Do you cheer at pep rallies and football games? And when kids joke about Cannibal, they're talking about the one time when Marcia Sanders was a senior about to graduate. Because she was such a stone fox, she was the most popular and she was the head yell leader and because she was class president and because she was such a dish. Because she had nothing in fourth period she was the TA in American Civics, where she approached Cannibal, because he was still only in seventh grade and because she knew he'd never say no because he was so stoned on puberty.

She's all, "You like my hair, don't you?" Her head rolls to swing her hair like a spaghetti cape, and she goes, "This is the longest my hair's ever been."

The way she says this sounds dirty, because everything sounds dirty when it comes out of a sexy girl's mouth. And because Cannibal doesn't know any better, Cannibal agrees to rendezvous with Marcia Sanders at her house because Mr. and Mrs. Sanders are gone to the lake that weekend. She only asks him because she says her boyfriend, the team captain of every sport, won't put her on like a gas mask. This is her, here's her, she says this, Marcia Sanders, she says, "You really want to do me, kid?" And because Cannibal has no idea what she means, he says, "Yeah."

Because then she says to come by her house after dark on Saturday and come to the kitchen door because she has a reputation to uphold. And because Marcia Sanders says he can be her secret boyfriend, Cannibal doesn't think twice.

Because at Jefferson Middle School when they grade you on Good Citizenship, they mean: Do you wash your hands after launching a corn canoe? Because half the time Cannibal doesn't know what he's thinking, he goes on Saturday night and Marcia Sanders folds the bedspread back on the king-size waterbed in her parents' bedroom. She spreads two layers of bath towels across the waterbed and says to make sure his head goes in the middle of them. She says not to take off his clothes, but Cannibal figures that comes later because she unzips her jeans and folds them over the back of a chair, and because he's looking at her panties so hard she says to shut his eyes. Because Cannibal only pretends not to peek he sees her kneel on the padded rail at the edge of the waterbed, and he can see why it's called a ham wallet. After that he can't see jack because she slings one leg over his face and squats down until the room is nothing but fish taco blotting out everything except the underwater sound of Marcia Sanders's voice telling him what to do next.

Cannibal finds himself sunk head-deep in waterbed with sloppy waterbed mattress squeezed up around his ears, hearing the lap of ocean waves. His body rocking from head to toe, hearing his heartbeat, hearing somebody's heartbeat. Because Marcia Sanders, out of nowhere her voice tells him, "Suck, already, you stupid dummy," Cannibal sucks.

Because she says, "Let's get this over with," he sucks like giving her insides a big hickey.

Cannibal can't put up a fight because when kids say his legs are thick as tree trunks, they're talking about willow trees. And when *The 700 Club* talks about delightful, inspiring life stories, this ain't that because the harder Cannibal sucks the harder it gets because the suction is sucking back. Because he's battling her wet insides in this tug-of-war over nothing.

Cannibal is wearing Marcia Sanders like a gas mask, sucking on her like she's a snakebite, with her thighs so ear-muffed tight to the sides of his head he can't hear why she's screaming. Because on the Playboy channel, screaming is what you strive for. Cannibal's freaked out because a blue waffle on cable only smells like whatever your mom's cooking upstairs. Because a ham wallet on television never fights back, Cannibal sucks the way a tornado on the Weather Channel will bust one window and turn your entire house inside out.

Because Cannibal's never eaten a muff pie, he thinks the waterbed's sprung a leak because he hears a pop inside his head. It's like your ears pop when you ride a fast elevator to the top of the Sears Tower. Like when you snap your chewing gum or bite down on a ripe cherry tomato.

He figures the mattress is popped because what happens next is he's coughing water that tastes like tears. Because it's gallons, like Tammy Faye Bakker's cried a hundred years inside his mouth, and because Cannibal's never chowed down on a blue waffle the next thing he knows is that he's killed her because it's her insides gushing down his throat. Because she's hollering like a truck-stop diner. All this happens in not even two heartbeats, but because he's watched the Playboy channel the next thing Cannibal knows is that he's made her gush buckets of lady soup straight into his gullet. Because he's seen those videos where ladies geyser from jerking off, big spumes like Animal Planet whales spouting or those fire boats hosing down the Statue of Liberty during a Bicentennial Moment. Because he's seen their big sprays of lady gravy soaking into the orange-cheese-

colored shag carpeting they always have in Playboy movies, Cannibal knows enough about lady juice not to spit it out, because the worst way to insult somebody is not to swallow what she's serving up.

Because his only experience with lady sauce is from cable TV, Cannibal doesn't realize there's a chunk of something solid mixed in. Not right away. Because bumping between his tongue and the roof of his mouth, right now, is this salt-flavored jelly bean. It's a kidney bean that tastes like the water in a jar of pickles. It's knocking around like the last green olive in a jar of boiling-hot olive water. And because it's so small Cannibal just gulps it down.

Because half the time Cannibal doesn't know what he's thinking, he says, "You did it."

Marcia Sanders is fishing a fresh cotton pony out from her purse and goes, "I swear to you I didn't know." She never even takes off her top, and already she's zipping up her jeans.

And Cannibal goes, "I made you come."

She opens her mouth but doesn't say anything because then the doorbell rings, and it's her real boyfriend.

Because Cannibal makes Marcia Sanders geyser so hard she has to take a Tylenol and strap on a pussy plug, Cannibal knows he's a stud. Because Marcia Sanders must brag to Linda Reynolds because Linda Reynolds sidles up next to him outside the chemistry modules and asks if he can be her secret boyfriend too. Because Cannibal gobbles meat muffin so good Patty Watson wants a piece of his action because he makes every fur burger spout heaping helpings of special sauce. Because the quickest way to a woman's heart is through a man's stomach.

Because how far would a high schooler go to get back the rest of her life? And because Cannibal is giving everybody another shot at being virgins. He's everybody's dirty little secret, except he's not so secret. Because he's not so little, not anymore. Because Cannibal's getting fat on the mistakes high schoolers make, it's Marcia Sanders who says they have to shut him up. Linda Reynolds campaigns to meet Cannibal out behind the Vocational Building with a swift tire iron to the head some Friday night because Cannibal's strutting around, too smart for his own good but too dumb to know he's total evil. Because now when Cannibal belches, it's your poor choice he's tasting. And when Cannibal farts that's the smell of your parents' dead grandbaby.

Because if you believe Pat Robertson, *The 700 Club* says that Jesus, one time, bade a legion of unclean spirits leave an afflicted man, and those demons went into a herd of swine. Because then those swine had to throw themselves off a cliff into the Sea of Galilee, that's how come Cannibal has to die. It's the only decent path to take.

Because even the priests who eat sins through the kitchen window at Catholic church, when they're filled full even they need to be destroyed. That's why a scapegoat goes to slaughter. Because if you believe in evolution the world is just everybody prancing down a yellow-brick road in Technicolor singing, "Because, because, because, because, because...." When the real truth is in the Old Testament, where the seven tribes wander around, lost, always saying, "Begat, begat, begat, begat, begat...."

Because the upside is that maybe Cannibal will go to heaven since except for his mouth he's still a virgin.

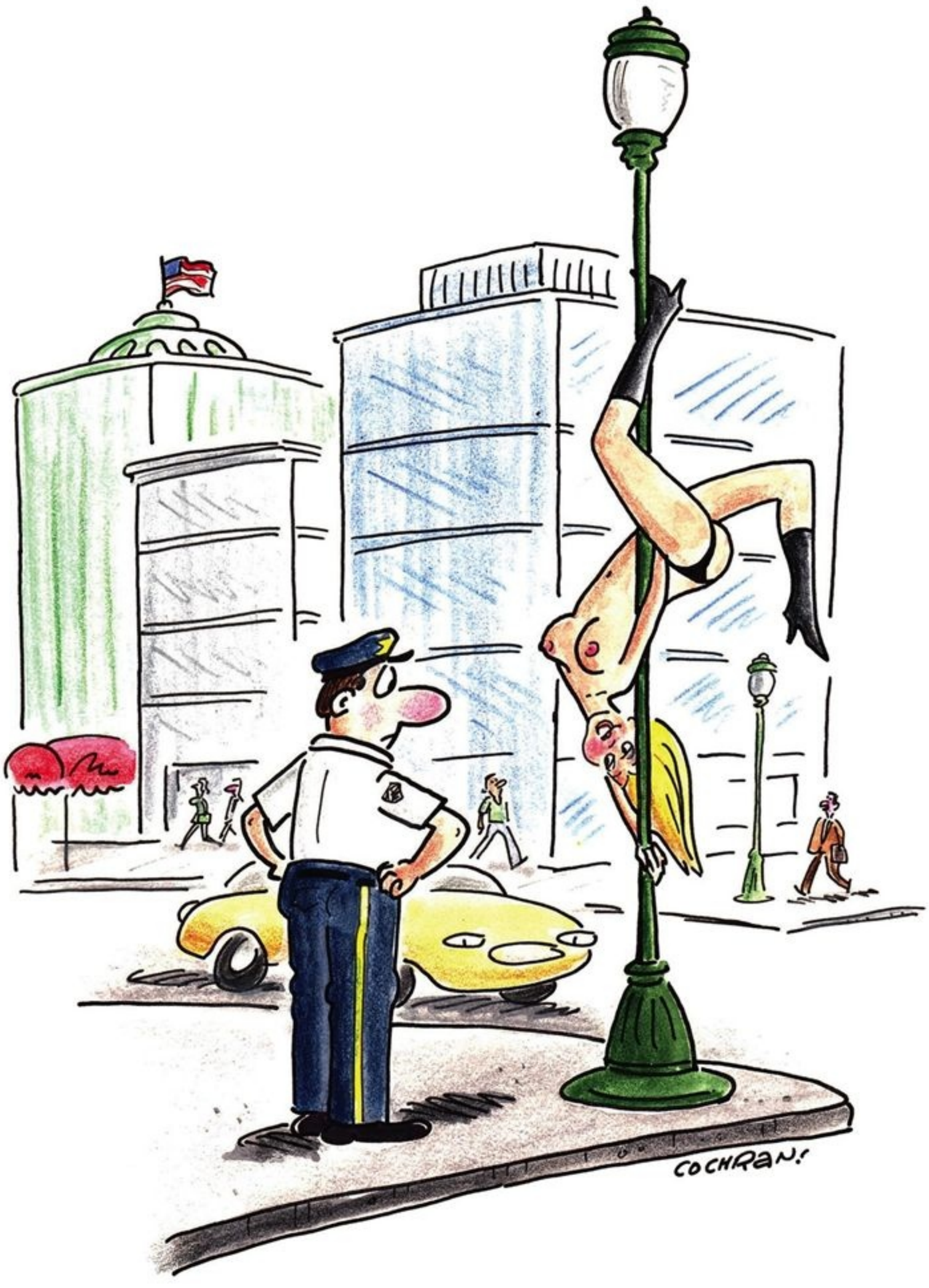
Because at this school no matter who the team captains pick now it's always not Cannibal, who personifies that thing that eventually comes for us all so we say, "Give us seat belts and give us pap smears and we'll take poverty and we'll take old age, just don't let Cannibal come stand next to us. Don't let Cannibal's shadow fall over our house."

Choosing sides, the captain of the Red Team says, "We'll give you our best pitcher...."

And we'll take the kid who picks his nose and eats it. And we'll take the kid who smells like piss. We'll take the leper and the left-handed Satanist and the HIV-infected hemophiliac and the hermaphrodite and the pedophile. We'll take drug addiction and we'll take JPEGs of the world instead of the world, MP3s instead of music, and we'll trade real life for sitting at a keyboard. We'll spot you happiness and we'll spot you humanity, and we'll sacrifice mercy just so long as you keep Cannibal at bay.

Because Marcia Sanders doesn't begat anything, her real boyfriend graduates and gets to go to Michigan State for an accounting degree, because of all this Patty Watson makes a date to meet Cannibal on Friday night behind the Vocational Building and Linda Reynolds says she'll get a crowbar. And they all agree to wear latex gloves.

Because maybe they can all go back to playing games once Cannibal's gone.



"I have to practice someplace when the club's closed."

SALE OF THE CENTURY

(continued from page 74)

over the past decade. For everything we hear about the bad loans that Wall Streeters peddled, this one horny young con artist in Florida had them beat. "I'm going on 20 years as a federal public defender," said his attorney Mildred Dunn, "and I don't know that I've ever seen anyone quite as imaginative as him."

Despite Cox's ingenuity, this globe-trotting fugitive failed to take one thing into account: that he would end up in prison. That's where I found him one sweltering afternoon last summer, sitting in a bare concrete courtyard at the federal correctional institution in Coleman, Florida. A short, clean-cut 43-year-old with spiky brown hair, green eyes and a graying soul patch, Cox stood out from the tattooed prisoners milling nearby. "It's depressing," he told me as he glanced furtively around. "This is not a good environment."

For the next 21 years, however, it's his, and I had come to get the first full account of his inside story. How did a dyslexic kid from Florida become one of the greatest swindlers of our time?

If you ask Cox, he'll give you two answers. Told by his father that he'd never amount to anything, he had an insatiable need to prove himself. And as he discovered, he had just the power he needed to do so: an ability to look at a system and artfully exploit its flaws. As he told me, "I see something, and I just see the holes in it."

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Cox first saw holes every time he picked up a book. Dyslexic, he hated the fact that he couldn't read like other kids. To make matters worse, he was put in a special program where some of his classmates had Down syndrome, which compounded his insecurities. A teacher told him he'd never graduate from high school. "That almost made him more determined," recalled his mother, Margaret.

Ashamed of his condition, Cox became an expert actor. To avoid the embarrassment of not being able to read a menu quickly, he realized he could just order chicken all the time and go unnoticed. It was a key insight for the future con artist. "You come up with ways around things," he recalled. "It's diversion." Cox's dad, an insurance agency manager and alcoholic, was less than sympathetic. "You grow up being called a loser and 'you stupid nothing,'" Cox told me with a grimace. "The only way to fix all your problems is with money."

Despite his troubles, Cox grew to be charming and ambitious, a people pleaser with a taste for fast cars, sexy women and fine art. To compensate for his diminutive frame, he began obsessively working out. He also taught himself to paint. Although he graduated summa cum laude from the fine arts program at the University of South Florida, his dad told him the best he'd do was to become a caricaturist at Disney World.

Determined to prove his father wrong, Cox set out to look for a future. His girlfriend, who worked in the mortgage industry, suggested he take a job as a broker. Despite the recent dot-com crash on Wall Street, a housing bubble was beginning to grow—particularly in Florida, where aging boomers were eager to retire. Cox saw an opportunity to join the 28,000 other people in the state with mortgage-broker licenses. He got a job and a cubicle in a mortgage-brokerage office.

Though a natural salesman, he couldn't earn enough to maintain his increasingly expensive lifestyle. With credit card bills going unpaid, he fell into debt, warding off repo men and foreclosure—and facing the crushing reality that he'd have to move in with his parents.

Then his fortune changed. Cox had a sizable deal that wasn't closing. His client had been late on her rent. Now she wanted to buy a place, but banks were wary. His boss offered a solution: Take a bottle of Wite-Out and doctor the application so it looked as though the rent payments had been made on time. Cox had never done anything criminal before, but he felt desperate enough to dab Wite-Out on the page. "That decision changed the course of my entire life," he later recalled.

When the tweaked application closed without a problem, Cox became a con artist—in the truest sense of the word. With his steady hand and eagle eye, he discovered his fine-art training made him an expert forger. He began to meticulously craft bogus documents he needed to close a loan: W-2 statements, pay stubs and canceled checks. He even figured out how to make his own notary stamp.

Before long Cox left his job and opened his own company to cash in on his skills. He had reason to be inspired. By 2002 America's real estate market was, as *The Washington Post* put it, "roaring." To beef up the economy, mortgage rates dropped to their lowest in 30 years, fueling a wave of home purchases and refinancing. Although some had concerns about an overextended bubble, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan told Congress not to worry, attributing the boom to the "demand of low mortgage rates, immigration and shortages of buildable land."

But the boom, as Cox knew, was also sparked by scams like his own. Remarkably, Cox later recalled, his forgeries were "caught all the time" by various underwriters and banks. But, he said, despite people making vague threats to report him to the FBI, no one ever did. Everyone was making money, so why fuss?

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Cox soon realized there was a way to make even more cash. Instead of doctoring applications of real people to get them loans, why not make up fake identities and use them to take out loans for himself—loans he would never pay back?

Using his access to home loan applications, Cox stole Social Security numbers—even from toddlers—and then created false identities to go along with them. He got so brazen that he named some of his fictitious people after colors, inspired by one of his favorite crime movies, *Reservoir Dogs*. "I thought I was being clever, but it was obnoxious," he recalled. He was also penning his own loosely autobiographical novel, *The Associates,* about a mortgage-fraud con.

But Cox couldn't outrun his scams forever. Eventually one of his counterfeit canceled checks caught up with him, and he pleaded guilty in 2002 to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The plea only emboldened him. The sentence, he marveled, was remarkably light: a $1,000 fine, 42 months of probation and the loss of his mortgage license (which he had never needed to pull off his dirty work anyway).

His crimes continued unabated as he picked up new counterfeiting tricks, such as using sandpaper and an X-Acto knife to create fake driver's licenses. Soon Cox devised an even bigger plan: inflating the value of homes he bought in bad areas so he could refinance them and pull out heaps of cash. With the help of allies in the industry, Cox refined a system. He'd buy a crappy house and have his accomplices create inflated warranty deeds. Then other aides would refinance the homes so Cox could make a fortune.

Housing prices in Florida were heading for an astonishing 56 percent increase compared with five years prior. The Department of Commerce soon reported that new-home construction had hit its highest point since the mid-1980s. With money flowing in, Cox became a party-hopping playboy known around town for rolling up in his silver Audi TT Quattro and charming women and wannabe brokers alike. Kevin Stuteville, one of his early employees, found him to be "a very personable smooth talker. He makes an impression quickly."

Business continued to grow, and Cox maintained laser-sharp focus to stay on top of all his scams. Still, he needed help staying organized and found just the right office assistant in a pretty blonde named Alison Arnold. A young mom with a New Age streak, Arnold had her work cut out for her. "Nothing was organized," she recalled. Cox sensed something in Arnold that was "sweet and innocent," he told me, likening her to "a babe in the woods." To keep her onboard, Cox paid for her apartment and showered her with compliments. "No one ever believed in you like I believe in you," he'd say.

He took Arnold to his stylishly furnished apartment, which seemed to her more like an elaborate lair out of a crime movie. "He always had a dark side," she recalled. "He's like Batman." There was a back exit in case he had to flee and a picture frame on a wall that gave way to a secret room. "This is where I'm going to hide," he told her. Her suspicions were confirmed when he confessed that the "investors" in his properties were a ploy to acquire more properties. "My investors are me," he said. "They're fictitious, aliases, characters."

He was still ripping off identities from real people too. Cox had stolen the identity of a woman, Rosita Perez, and wanted Arnold to start withdrawing funds from bank accounts he'd opened in Perez's name. Arnold claimed she wanted to back out, but Cox leveraged her apartment to make her

comply. "You owe me," he told her. Nervous but with a son to support and hungry for money, Arnold dyed her hair brown, donned glasses and a baseball cap and tried to pass herself off as Latina. As she walked into the bank, she recalled, "I felt like my life was a movie."

But the movie was quickly turning dark. When the bank clerk told Arnold she'd have to wait a few days to withdraw her funds, she panicked and quit working with Cox. It was good timing. A task force out of Tampa was on his trail, sending hundreds of subpoenas around town and estimating that he had inflated the value of more than 100 properties, equaling millions of dollars in fraud. It was, as one investigator put it, "one of the largest, most flagrant displays of public-records and banking manipulation we've ever seen."

When Cox got word that the local paper was preparing an exposé on him, he felt his throat constrict. Rather than face going to what he called "the federal rape factory," he devised another plan: assume a new identity for real—and run.

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"Free home loan applications, 100 percent financing available, good credit/bad credit, no problem." This ad in a Tampa Bay flyer seemed too good to be true, but so did the real estate market. By 2004 housing prices in nearly half of America's major metropolitan areas were showing double-digit annual increases, a record achievement. And six of the 10 areas posting the biggest gains—increases of more than 25 percent—were in Florida.

Eager home buyers who answered the flyer ad, however, weren't being patched through to a legitimate broker. They were talking with a fugitive. With $83,000 in cash in his pocket, Cox had fled Florida for Atlanta, on a mission not just to evade the law but to find a permanent identity he could hide behind. Using his ad as a front, he was conning callers into turning over all their personal information.

Meanwhile, lying in bed beside him was a new sidekick, a sexy and rambunctious blonde named Rebecca Hauck. Cox had met Hauck, a single mother who had recently relocated from Las Vegas, on a dating site, and the affair was passionate and intense. Cox told her of his crimes and his need to escape Tampa, but she didn't care. She sent her young boy to live with relatives so she could be the Bonnie to Cox's Clyde.

They were soon traversing the South, stealing identities, opening fake accounts and scamming hundreds of thousands of dollars from mortgage lenders and credit card companies. They blew the cash on designer bags, laptops, Rolexes and plastic surgery for Hauck. There was so much cash around they had to hide it in air-conditioning vents and in their freezer. But the feds had recently raided his office in Tampa, and Cox was buckling under the stress of life on the run. He was numbing himself with Xanax, trying to dull the pain of disappearing from his family without a trace.

Jacked on sex, money and drugs, Cox was on the prowl for a lucrative pool of victims: the homeless. Stealing an identity always involved the risk that the real person would track him down, but, Cox realized, people on the streets rarely had the means. Pretending to be a survey taker for the Salvation Army, Cox would pay a homeless person $20 to answer a series of questions: where he was from, his mother's maiden name, his Social Security number and so on—the details Cox needed to take out credit cards and loans.

On a trip to Vegas, he pried the details from a male prostitute, Gary Sullivan. Cox drove off with a new identity and a grin on his face. "You know," he told Hauck, "the homeless are widely underutilized."

•

One day Cox took a long look in the mirror. He barely recognized himself. His nose was thinner, his hair thicker, his teeth whiter. Even his man-boobs—"bitch tits," he called them—were gone. That's what $27,000 in cosmetic surgery, hair grafts and dental work had gotten him. The physical changes weren't just for his ego. They were for his survival. By now Cox was at the top of the Secret Service list, and wanted posters of him and Hauck hung in more than a thousand banks and real estate companies in several states.

With a new face and a new identity, complete with forged documents for Gary Sullivan—his birth certificate, state ID, even a new Social Security card—Cox was eager to fatten his wallet. He opened up several bank accounts, enough that he could easily fill with a couple of million in home-equity loans. He gobbled up homes at full price using owner financing (a system by which the buyer finances the home through the seller rather than a bank, taking possession of the property while paying the seller off in monthly installments). Then he could take out mortgages against the homes. For just a $12,500 down payment he could borrow more than $500,000 against a home.

His victims never knew what hit them, especially not Dr. Bruce Brown, an ophthalmologist who was on active duty in the Army, and his wife, Bridget. The couple badly needed to sell their house in Columbia, South Carolina. Their baby boy was born with a birth defect that had required 50 surgeries so far. To make matters worse, they were eager to move to Georgia for a new job and were unable to find a buyer for their home. Their real estate agent suggested they consider owner financing—and there was Gary Sullivan, ready to do the deal.

At the closing Sullivan seemed nice enough, though, as Brown later put it, "a little cheesy." He also seemed to have "a little inferiority complex," Brown recalled. "He said he had to be good in one area to make up for being short." But Sullivan's $20,000 deposit went through without a hitch, and he gave the Browns a year's worth of payments in the form of postdated checks. Using Sullivan's identity, Cox took possession of the home and immediately refinanced, pulling out cash. Brown came back from a trip to Disney World and found a message from a Secret Service agent on his answering machine. "I thought it was someone at work playing a prank," he recalled. It wasn't, and as the Browns painfully learned, they'd fallen victim to Cox's ruse.

In a daze, the Browns went to the house they'd sold Cox, and what they found was chilling. It looked like a model home that had been staged, since of course Cox didn't actually live there as he'd claimed. There was some spare furniture. Upstairs, they found a bed made with a comforter and pillows, but when they pulled back the blanket there were no sheets underneath. The bathroom contained clothes and toiletries, as if a woman lived there, but the Browns noticed the clothes still had price tags on them.

By early 2005 Cox's relationship with Hauck had become volatile, and one

"Hey! None of that till happy hour!"

morning after an argument he walked out for good—just as she was threatening to call the cops on him. The investigators were already close on Cox's trail, however. To help legitimize his fake identities, he also created fake voice-mail systems for his fake employers—just in case anyone checked his references. But now when he dialed the voice mail, Cox heard a message from the Secret Service looking for one of his fake identities.

Soon after, in Charlotte, North Carolina, Cox was buying coffee at a Starbucks when he noticed two employees of the nearby apartment complex where he lived. They were eying him so intently that Cox assumed he owed them rent. He was wrong. One began shouting, "Right here! Right here!" Cox turned to see two men in suits running toward him. He had always loved crime films, and now he was living the part for real, hopping in his car and flooring the gas pedal.

He escaped this close call, but he wasn't in the clear. He was addicted to the scams, the adventures, the sprees—and the women. He soon fell for a new single mom he'd found online, Amanda Gardner, a pretty blonde who'd recently left the Army and had a young son. This time Cox refused to reveal his real name and instead passed himself off as the latest homeless person whose identity he'd stolen, Joseph Carter.

Gardner didn't know Cox's real name or that he was a wanted criminal, but he was falling hard for her. Using the fake passport he'd created for himself, the two traveled to Italy and Greece, buying Cartier jewelry and Dolce & Gabbana clothing. Dreaming of a life with Gardner, Cox hatched a plan: As soon as he got $2.5 million in cash, they'd run off together. "I thought I'd get a chunk of money and leave the United States," he told me. "I was in love."

He and Gardner found a new home in Nashville, and they met a sexy and fun-loving blonde computer saleswoman. Cox had had his share of sexual adventures, but he was soon living his biggest dream yet: a three-way relationship with two women. He began to suspect the blonde was falling harder for Gardner than for him, but he put it out of his mind—until one afternoon when he got an urgent call from Gardner.

Gardner had just gotten off the phone with their friend, who was "acting really strange," she said. "She started telling me about how much I mean to her. I think she might have done something."

On November 16, 2006 Cox felt as if he were in a movie again, but this time it was the inevitable ending. He heard squealing tires. Saw a black car pulling up. Another car blocking his way. The agents with their guns trained on him. The firm hands on his shoulder. His face slamming the pavement. But it was a face that, after all the plastic surgery, even the feds couldn't be sure they recognized.

"You think it's him?" he heard one Secret Service agent ask another.

"It's him," the agent replied. "Look at his eyes. It's him."

•

Cox wasn't the only one crashing hard by 2007. So was the overheated housing market he personified. After years of easy credit, the American economy finally buckled under the weight of all the bad and unpaid loans. The worst economic downturn since the Great Depression was soon upon us.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—which owned almost half the country's $12 trillion mortgage market—were collapsing. Nearly 10 percent of mortgages were said to be either in default or in foreclosure by late 2008. As the ripple effect took down Wall Street stalwarts such as Lehman Brothers, the so-called global financial crisis became a reality, and the party, for Cox and everyone else who had lived high during the bubble, was over.

When asked later about his capture, Cox said, "I was relieved briefly. I didn't realize how much stress I was under." He remained convinced that the blonde turned him in out of jealousy over Gardner. All his plans and ploys couldn't overcome something truly uncontrollable: a threesome gone bad.

Facing 42 counts of fraud and more than 400 years in prison, Cox copped a plea that got him a 26-year sentence and an order to pay almost $6 million in restitution. Authorities estimate he stole as much as $26 million. He wasn't the only one who went down. Both Hauck and Arnold have served time, and the two have since met and traded stories about Cox. "He always had a fantasy of being wanted," Arnold told me. "He found it more exciting than living this boring life."

Cox has dealt with the boredom of prison by writing a memoir and teaching a real estate class to the prisoners in his plentiful spare time. He has been in demand outside the walls too. Denis Kelly, a former bank partner and the founder of ID Cuffs, an identity-theft protection service, has consulted with Cox to improve his product. "It's surprising that we're working together at all," Kelly told me. "Here's the guy who was our nemesis for so long."

The Florida Mortgage Broker School, which administers required exams and education for industry hopefuls, has also worked with Cox to improve student training. According to Jim Montrym, head of the school, Cox's insights were essential and the moral of his story remained clear: "That you can go to jail for 26 years when you pull this bullshit."

But the "bullshit" is still being pulled by others, experts say. "As far as the scams I was running," Cox told me, "nothing has changed that could have stopped anything I did."

Before I left the prison, I broached the touchiest subject for Cox: his dad, who was suffering from Alzheimer's and couldn't tell his side of the story. Cox glazed over as he recalled the day his father had come to visit him in prison. The two sat across from each other, awkwardly trying to connect over the din of vending machines and shuffling guards.

Since his childhood, Cox had desperately craved love and respect from a man who never seemed able or inclined to give either. The son's memories of his father were of drunken nights and insults. But on this day, his father had surprised him. "The things you know how to do are incredible," his dad had told him. "You lived an incredible life. I'm proud of you."

As Cox recalled this story, his eyes welled up and his shoulders slackened. These were the words from his father that he'd been waiting for his whole life. He just never expected it would take going to prison to hear them.

"So how did you feel when he said this to you?" I asked.

"Horrible," he said.

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ACCIDENTAL CAPITALIST

(continued from page 106)

we've never had such growth. People become conservative. They'll buy products that last a long time. We have loyal customers. We let them tell us how big we should be and what to make. We grew 30 percent last year. This year we decided that's too much and we're going to go for 15 percent. The truth is that every time we've done the right thing, it's made us money."

On politics he again turned cranky and provocative. "The United States is too big to govern," he said. "California is the ninth-largest economy in the world. It should be its own country. We have a flawed Constitution. There isn't an emerging country in the world that wants to copy our electoral process."

The panel opened to questions, and the subject turned to how Patagonia enlisted 50 of the world's largest clothing companies (including Walmart, Levi's and Nike) to create the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, which is developing the Higg index—a rating system that will allow buyers to compare products' environmental impact.

"The index gives ammunition to the consumer," Chouinard tells me later. "They can look at five pairs of jeans on a table, and if one is a two and the other a 10, they'll be able to tell which was made more responsibly. I think the coalition is the most exciting thing we've done."

•

Chouinard was born in Maine to a tough, mechanically talented French Canadian father and an adventurous mother, and for his first seven years he spoke only French. In 1946 the family made a *Grapes of Wrath*–style trip in an old Chrysler to Burbank, California.

Speaking no English and stuck with a girl's name, he had a hard time in grammar school. He was an all-around athlete in high school but found what would become lifelong passions in the solitary sports of fishing, climbing and surfing.

He is a small man—five-foot-four, about 140 pounds—and has a sense of humor about his size. When Yale asked him how they could improve the university, "I told them to lower the urinals," he says. "They are too high." He is nevertheless a smooth and powerful athlete: nimble, quick and tenacious on the tennis court, able to turn small waves into long rides in the water, and strong, graceful and daring—at a level of difficulty that would make spiders sweat—as a rock climber (one of the most celebrated in the world).

Chouinard began climbing on small rock piles around southern California and then moved on to hobo summers in Wyoming's Tetons, driving there in a 1940 Ford he'd rebuilt in auto shop. One summer he and a friend ate cat food and slept in an old incinerator they'd cleaned out. "I can sleep anywhere," Chouinard says. At 17 he fell in with a hard-climbing bunch of Yosemite beatniks who were using soft-metal pitons, the spikes from which safety ropes are hung, to make the first climbs of the great valley walls. Chouinard, an obsessive toolmaker, got busy on a better mousetrap. He bought a junkyard forge and anvil, installed them in his car and began making harder, reusable pitons out of chrome molybdenum, a material that made it possible for climbers to remove the pitons from the cracks after climbing past them. European pitons cost 20 cents each and had to be left in the rock. Chouinard's harder spikes cost $1.50 but were reusable, and the enterprise began to pay for his climber's lifestyle.

These were the glory days of Yosemite climbing. The great granite faces of El Capitan, Half Dome and others still stood unclimbed. "We didn't know if these things could be summited or not," says Chouinard, looking back on the most perilous of the early big-wall efforts. "We had to face the fear of the unknown. We just went for it." He and the others reveled in the fact that climbing rocks that could kill you accomplished nothing. "It was the 1960s," he says. "We climbed out of rebellion." They called themselves "conquistadors of the useless."

"The only fun is breaking the rules and making it work," Chouinard says. "And since I own the company and have no stockholders, I can do what I want."

One of his most famous first ascents pushed him to his absolute limit and left him hanging in a hammock 2,000 feet up on the sheer, blank face of El Cap, his fingers so swollen he couldn't tie a proper knot, out of food, out of water, hallucinating. The route was called the Salathé Wall, after a legendary Yosemite climber and blacksmith.

Chouinard and climbing partner Tom Frost, carrying the minimum supplies they thought they'd need, spent nine days hammering, carving a way up—"becoming one with the rock in a way you don't get when you're up there for just a few hours or a few days," he says. "You're hungry and freezing and it becomes like you're *in* the mountain. I love the big walls for that."

About the hallucinations he says, "There are different ways to get there, that deep Zen moment, but they all take a lot of time and effort. I've experienced it in the shed, at the forge, the repetitive pounding out of pitons one after another, then throwing them in a barrel. After a while the barrel starts to glow."

The tin shed he's talking about still stands among Patagonia's other buildings in Ventura. He and Frost rented it from a meatpacking company and incorporated as the Great Pacific Iron Works. They expanded their catalog into soft goods, including rugby shirts, jackets and shorts, as well as the climbing hardware, and in 1972 incorporated as Patagonia. The first employees were a dozen climbing friends.

Becoming a businessman has been a long struggle for Chouinard, who to this day calls businessmen "greaseballs" or "pasty-faced corpses in suits." Working with money, he likes to say, is "getting doo-doo on your hands," and Patagonia's early success embarrassed him in a way.

As Chouinard writes in his 2005 autobiography, *Let My People Go Surfing*, "The typical young Republican's dream of making more money than his parents, starting a company, growing it as fast as possible, taking it public and retiring to the golf courses of a leisure world has never appealed to me. My values are the result of living a life close to nature and being passionately involved in what some people would call risky sports. My wife, Malinda, and I and the other contrarian employees of Patagonia have taken lessons learned from these sports and our alternative lifestyle and applied them to running a company."

He takes great pride in being contrarian. "If I'd done all the things the business people have told me to do, I'd have gone out of business a long time ago," he says. "The only fun is breaking the rules and making it work. And since I own the company and have no stockholders, I can do what I want."

In fact, there was a moment about 20 years after he started the company when its runaway success came perilously close to sinking the business and forced Chouinard to put both hands deep into the doo-doo. Company earnings were $80 million, and it took galloping expansion to keep up with demand for the clothing.

"Those were the toughest times we ever went through," says Stanley, who as head of marketing was in charge of putting together the highly praised catalogs. "It was 1991. We had very strong sales and were committed to growing. We launched new product lines. We had almost unlimited credit with the bank, and we were using it. Then the country went into recession, and our bank wasn't prepared and we weren't prepared. There was a cutoff of credit. We had too much inventory and not enough inventory control, and we had to let 20 percent of our people go."

Chouinard still suffers from the memory of firing 120 people, many of them old friends. "It was absolutely a feeling of failure," he says. "It was certainly my fault. I took my eye off the ball, and we just got lost going for growth. Since then I've done everything differently."

In 2001 the good that Chouinard built into his business became a program called 1% for the Planet, which mandates

that one percent of company sales go to small environmental activist groups. Last year that amounted to $750,000 for Patagonia, not including the contributions from individual stores, which now number 60 worldwide. Today the program has expanded to include 1,300 other companies, which have contributed more than $45 million since its founding.

In the early 1990s Chouinard decided to examine the pollution and energy use involved in producing Patagonia's clothing line. The company looked closely at the four major fabrics and all the dyes being used. It began to recycle plastic soda bottles to make fleece jackets. And in 1994 it made the risky decision that the only kind of cotton it would use in its clothes would be organic.

"It wasn't easy to make the transition," says Chouinard. "Cotton had been grown for most of its 4,000-year history without the use of all the poisonous chemicals currently in the process. But we found there weren't many organic-cotton growers in the world. It's very labor intensive, and we knew it was going to be expensive."

Patagonia's cotton T-shirts cost an average of $10 more than conventional cotton shirts. Patagonia customers, however, have been willing to pay the price.

•

Ventura is a beach town about 70 miles northwest of Los Angeles, and Chouinard chose it for his tin-shed forge because the local waves were good. He's been surfing here since 1958. He and Malinda own a house on the water, but these days he does most of his surfing about an hour and a half north at a place he calls the ranch—100 gated acres of pristine coastal hills dotted with huge old oak and eucalyptus trees where he built his dream getaway. It's a small three-bedroom house with a view of a perfect reef break 100 feet below that is accessible only from the private land or by boat. The 1,500-square-foot house was built to extreme green standards: Nearly all the wood and stone is recycled, and 600 toxic materials Chouinard says are ordinarily used in home construction were painstakingly excluded.

It's a handsome, comfortable place so energy efficient he's never had to heat or cool it. When I ask him how much it cost, he says, "The materials were nothing—broken sidewalk and old railroad-trestle beams. But the labor," he rolls his eyes, "I don't even want to know."

Chouinard had returned to Ventura for two reasons: because Patagonia's board of directors (which includes Yvon and Malinda and their two children, Fletcher, now 38, and Claire, 33) scheduled a meeting, and because Claire was about to deliver his first grandchild, a girl named Arrow.

I've been to the headquarters property they call the campus half a dozen times over the years. I've watched it grow from two buildings to five, but the feel of the place remains pretty much what it was 30 years ago. The fuel-efficient cars in the parking lot have surfboards and kayaks on roof racks for when the surf is up. The company flex-time policy allows employees to pursue their sports. Young staffers, dressed mostly in Patagonia, move without hurry past a sandbox and a large, grassy play area for the 50 kids, 16 months to five years old, who are part of the company's child-care program. All the 300 employees here, as well as 1,300 others around the world, full and part time, have health insurance. Women make up more than half the staff. Chouinard, who has two older sisters, says, "I think women are smarter than men, more intuitive, more loyal."

"The most amazing thing about this place," Vincent Stanley tells me the morning I arrive in Ventura, "is that it hasn't changed in 40 years. When I got here in 1968 it was this tiny culture of 20 climbers and surfers, and it had this feeling for equality and excellence that has survived into a company of 1,500 people with a very sophisticated management process. I think it's because Yvon and Malinda's spirit, and what they consider important, hasn't changed. And the day care," he points to three women shepherding 15 preschoolers across a lawn, "which Malinda is instrumental in, is a big part of the reason for the feeling of community. It's hard to be hierarchical around kids. They soften the culture, keep us honest."

On the way across the campus I stop by the Quonset hut that houses Fletcher Chouinard Designs, where Yvon's son builds Patagonia surfboards. I'd heard Yvon complain for years about the shoddy quality of the boards he was breaking around the world, and 20 years ago his son began to design boards out of new, sturdier, nontoxic material. Son had followed father into risky sports, surfing big waves, 20- and 30-footers, including at Mavericks, northern California's notorious garden of breaking monsters.

"I really enjoy riding the big waves," Fletcher tells me as we talk over the noise of computerized machines grinding boards out of nontoxic Styrofoam. "Mavericks is a scary place, but it's fun being terrified. And I don't let anything come out of here that I haven't ridden."

"What Fletcher has done with surfboards is what I did with climbing gear," says his proud father. "He's reinvented the surfboard, making the best boards out of totally different, stronger materials. He's got a great reputation for big-wave boards because he rides them himself, does his own testing. I'm his old-guy tester."

"He's a real innovator," says Fletcher of working with his dad. "It doesn't even matter whether he's involved in an industry, he always has an idea how to improve on everything."

•

I meet the old-guy tester in the company lunchroom, where the staff has the choice of a long salad bar or a hot menu.

As we sit we're joined by Rick Ridgeway, an old Chouinard friend, award-winning photographer and long-famous adventurer. He has worked off and on for Patagonia for 40 years and is currently vice president of environmental projects.

"Nice to see the two of you alive and well," I say, remembering the story of an emblematic moment in their outdoor careers: An avalanche nearly killed both of them and left them profoundly changed in its deadly wake. I hear the fear in their voices as they describe their terror.

It was 1980 and China had just reopened to mountaineering. Chouinard, Ridgeway, climber Kim Schmitz and photographer Jonathan Wright were at 20,000 feet on a 24,700-foot peak called Gongga Shan. It was midday and just warm enough to loosen the snow, and they were roped together as they started down toward base camp. Just before the steep snow slabs broke loose, Chouinard had a premonition.

"I was right in the middle of a sentence, saying 'This snow doesn't feel——' and, *boom,* it happened. It was a feeling you can't describe; like a safecracker trying to describe how to crack a safe, you can't do it. It's a seat-of-the-pants feeling, like when you're surfing in sharky waters and the hair on the back of your neck stands up. You don't know why, but you know you should get out of the water."

The four were engulfed, swept down and over a 40-foot drop into a steep gully. Then it stopped, 20 feet short of a 300-foot cliff. They didn't know it yet, but Wright's neck had been broken.

"We'd been tumbled, wrapped in our rope, crampons on, trying to extricate ourselves, and then it started again. At that point I knew a 300-foot cliff was coming up, and I thought we were dead. I expected to die."

The slide stopped for a second time, 30 feet short of the death plunge.

Chouinard, who says he stopped counting his dead friends when the number reached 50, tells me he was particularly depressed after the avalanche, not because he had almost died but because he had come back from death.

"I had accepted death," he says. "I was dead and I was okay with that. And when all of a sudden I was back, it was depressing."

After lunch Chouinard and I sit in the sun at a picnic table in the middle of his success, surrounded by the fruit trees—apple, fig, kumquat, mango—that he has planted all over the property. He hasn't changed much in the 15 years since we last spent time together. His hairline is ebbing, and the lines in his face are carved deeper into his wind-roughened tan. He carries an almost shy aura, but he's not shy when you hit his cranky zone or one of his passions.

He still climbs but not as much as he used to, and his approach has changed. "I've done a lot of first ascents in the past 10 years that I've never written about or even bothered to name. It has taken a while to get there. In the beginning your ego is involved and you want to tell the world about it. But the goal isn't the point. Who gives a shit what the holy grail is? It's the quest."

His current greatest passion is a different way to fly-fish. It's called *tenkara,* and he can talk the side of your face off about it. It's a Japanese technique developed hundreds of years ago that uses a telescoping pole with no reel or runner eyes. Picture Huck Finn with a bamboo pole. Chouinard's excitement about the method borders on the sexual.

"The tip of this 10-foot pole is so sensitive that with the smallest move I can make the fly do a lap dance in front of the fish," he says, demonstrating with his hands. "They go absolutely crazy. I've been going out with some of the best fly fishermen in America, and at the end of the day they'll have caught six or eight fish and I'll have caught 50. It's exciting because I've always believed in simplicity, though the hardest thing in the world to do is simplify your life."

Chouinard applies *tenkara* to bigger issues and has used it to draw out the heart of his economic theory. "I take it as a metaphor for society," he says. "We think all our problems will be solved by technology, when what we have to do in a lot of cases is turn around and take a forward step. Technology destroys jobs. The lesson for the next economy is that we have to go back to the old handcrafted, high-quality stuff."

When I ask if he thinks his business philosophies would translate to larger companies, he says, "If they're making the best stuff and they've got their shit together. If they're just making crap, people will buy somewhere else. Every problem we've had at Patagonia has been solved by doing one thing: improving quality."

Despite the fact that he has designed Patagonia to be here in a hundred years, his outlook for the planet remains dour.

"Sometimes I think it's hopeless," he says about the lack of progress toward meaningful environmental change. "We have to try to get a grip on global warming. They told us 20 years ago that we had 30 years to get it together or else, and even if we did it would take a thousand years to repair the damage we've done to the ocean. The storm that hit New York ought to be a real wake-up call."

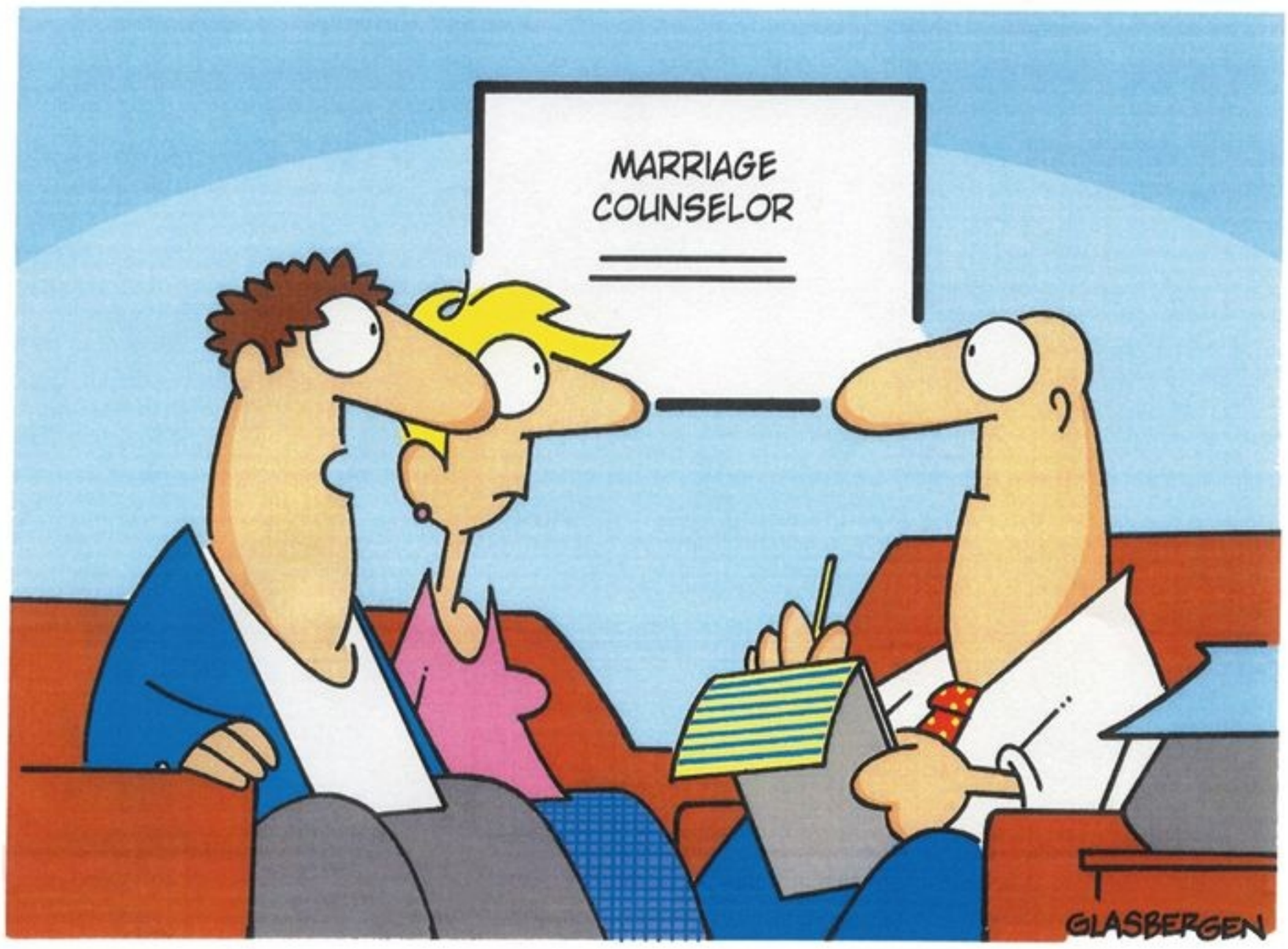
Chouinard has been a Zen adept since the beatnik days, though he doesn't meditate. "Mine is a Zen of action, not contemplation," he says. And, he claims, it keeps him from despair.

"Thinking dark thoughts doesn't depress me," he writes in *Let My People Go Surfing*. "In fact, I'm a happy person. I'm a Buddhist about it all. I've accepted the fact that there is a beginning and an end to everything. Maybe the human species has run its course and it's time for us to go away and leave room for other...more intelligent and responsible life-forms."

"Still," he tells me, "you have to do something to save your soul. I want to be a person who sleeps at night knowing I'm part of the solution."

A young staffer stops by and leans into our conversation. He's wearing shorts and a T-shirt, has longish hair and says he heard there's a nice swell building at the ranch.

"Probably ought to check it out," says Chouinard. Then he turns to me and smiles. "Nothing's changed. All I really want to do is go surfing and fishing."



"I used to be very stressed out, so Sharon insisted that I get a hobby. My hobby is Amanda."

DINKLAGE

(continued from page 72)

DINKLAGE: I have a pretty big scar that runs from my neck to my eyebrow. I was in a band called Whizzy for many years in New York. We were this punk-funk-rap band. We played a show at CBGB, and I was jumping around onstage and got accidentally kneed in the temple. I was like Sid Vicious, just bleeding all over the stage. Blood was going everywhere. I just grabbed a dirty bar napkin and dabbed my head and went on with the show. We didn't care much at the time about personal safety. We were smoking and drinking during our shows, and one time my bass player fell off the back of his amp because he passed out. It was one of those bands.

Q7

PLAYBOY: Have you stolen anything from a movie or TV set, such as your armor from *Game of Thrones*?

DINKLAGE: I wouldn't want it. We've all been hurt from the armor so much more than saved by it. It really hurts. If you fall over while wearing that armor, you could get your throat slashed. We had a guy fall off the back of a horse, and if he hadn't been wearing the armor, he would've been fine. But because he was covered from head to toe, he got banged up. It nearly killed him. That stuff is dangerous.

Q8

PLAYBOY: During your Golden Globes acceptance speech, you mentioned Martin Henderson, who was partially paralyzed during a dwarf-tossing attack in Britain. Did you ever hear from him?

DINKLAGE: No. And he doesn't need to call me. It's fine. The whole thing was spontaneous. The morning of the awards my wife and I were having coffee, and she saw a story about him on the internet. She's the one who told me, "You should say something." And I was like, "No, no, I don't want to be one of those actors with their political causes." But the world is kind of fucked-up, and sometimes you have to put a Band-Aid on the broken leg. My friends were less concerned with what I said than that I apparently brushed off Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie on my way to the stage. When you're in that moment and you're about to accept an award and you have no idea what you're going to say, you don't notice that Brad and Angelina are reaching out to say hello. All I saw was a sea of people I needed to get through. Friends don't care about issues like dwarf tossing. They only care about "Dude, you dissed Brangelina."

Q9

PLAYBOY: You're developing a biopic of the *Fantasy Island* actor Hervé Villechaize, in which you'll likely star. Other than being a dwarf, what do you have in common with Villechaize?

DINKLAGE: I guess not much. We're very different personalities. He had a desire that was definitely thwarted by the world, but I'm fascinated by him. He was quite outrageous. My friend the movie director Sacha Gervasi has been working on the script for a while, basing it on an interview with Hervé he did when he was a journalist. A magazine hired him to do a puff piece, but they ended up talking for hours. At one point Hervé pulled a knife on Sacha. He was like a pirate, an incredible character. Hervé killed himself about a week later, so Sacha realized the interview was actually a suicide note. It's a terribly sad tale, but there's something fun about getting into the skin of a guy like that, pretending to be him for a few months.

Q10

PLAYBOY: Villechaize preferred to be called a midget. Do you consider the word offensive?

DINKLAGE: It's like the *N* word among short-statured people. The etymology of the word is not good, but some of us have made it our own. We add an *e* with an accent at the end, so now it's *midgeté*—sort of a French version. I have a friend—not a dwarf—who's an alchemist of sorts. He concocted a men's cologne that he calls Midgeté Midgeté. He gave me a bottle as a gift. I was thinking, We should totally put this on the market. You know how Jessica Simpson and Beyoncé have signature perfumes and make a mint? I'm thinking this cologne could be my ticket to fortune. When this *Game of Thrones* thing winds down, Midgeté Midgeté could be my next thing.

Q11

PLAYBOY: You're from New Jersey. Was your upbringing more like a Bruce Springsteen song or the reality show *Jersey Shore*?

DINKLAGE: It's funny you mention Springsteen. I was born in Bay Head, New Jersey, and his manager lived next door to us. Bruce used to come over to his house and hang out and play guitar. This was when I was two, so I don't remember any of it. My mom and dad went to a wedding at a surfboard factory, and Bruce was in the wedding band. He was about 17 years old at the time. My mom didn't think he was that great. She told me he was too loud.

Q12

PLAYBOY: You went to high school in New Jersey. How well did you deal with that?

DINKLAGE: High school is a funny thing. On one hand you're so fragile. But I thought I was William Burroughs by the age of 13, so I had this massive ego as well. Everything in high school feels like it's life or death. I went to a pretty athletic high school, and I didn't have many friends. I remember once talking to my best friend, and we came up with the idea that we should hang ourselves off the bell tower. "That'll show them." We totally had no inclination to commit real suicide at all; we just liked the idea of the whole town responding to this tragedy, how the school would mourn. Oh God, we were so dramatic.

Q13

PLAYBOY: As kids, you and your brother would perform puppet shows for your parents. Was that your first taste of——

DINKLAGE: Whoa, whoa, just hold on! That sounds like I'm Ed Gein or John Wayne Gacy. [*haughtily*] "When I was performing puppet shows for mother and father." Good God, man. "When I skinned the squirrels and made puppets out of their carcasses and performed them for Mother and Father." Is that the impression you're trying to give people?

Q14

PLAYBOY: So it's not true? There were no puppet shows?

DINKLAGE: [*Sighs*] Yes, it's true. But it was for the neighborhood, not just Mom and Dad. Everybody in the neighborhood would come over and watch my brother and me do puppet shows. We basically did little puppet musicals with the loudest songs we could find. We did a puppet version of *Quadrophenia,* the Who album. We made drum kits out of tuna fish cans. It was fun. We would have haunted houses too. My brother, who's a violinist now, was the real ham, the real performer of the family. His passion for the violin is the only thing that kept him from being an actor.

Q15

PLAYBOY: You said no for a lot of years as an actor: no to playing elves or leprechauns, no to any role you thought was degrading, even if you were starving or unable to pay your rent. What's the trick to saying no when your bank account says yes?

DINKLAGE: It was never easy to say no. There were consequences, of course. I think I was more arrogant back then. I had this clear image of who I wanted to be, maybe too clear. I didn't allow anything to break the outline of it. I was very protective and defensive, mostly because of my size. I expected the entertainment business to see only my size and nothing else, so I wanted to pretend my size wasn't who I was at all and do roles that had nothing to do with it. But I was completely limiting myself and my career, because it is who I am. Look at roles like Tyrion. My size is obviously why I got the part. I wouldn't be playing Tyrion if I wasn't this size.

Q16

PLAYBOY: How did you make peace with that?

DINKLAGE: I didn't for many years. I basically just decided not to have a career. That was my only option, or what I thought was my only option. And then I started meeting friends who were writers and directors, and I found a back door. They put me in independent films, such as *The Station Agent* and *Living in Oblivion.* I came to terms with using my size rather than being exploited by it.

Q17

PLAYBOY: What's your secret to being poor in New York?

DINKLAGE: I don't think I have a secret. Back then it was so cheap to live in Brooklyn. That's why we went there, because we could afford it. There was nothing hip about it. I don't know how people do it these days, because Brooklyn isn't cheap anymore. At the time, we were living without any heat, not even a stove. I'm a baby now. I like my comforts. But in my 20s my friends and I took suffering for our art to an extreme. It sounds so ridiculous now. "In my day, we ate grubs and had a book of matches for heat. We made soup out of drywall." Shut up, young me.

Q18

PLAYBOY: You played Tina Fey's boyfriend on *30 Rock.* She reportedly wrote the part for you because she wanted a "showmance" with you. How do you politely tell Tina Fey, "I'm sorry, but I'm married"?

DINKLAGE: Well, she's married as well. And also, this is what we do for a living. You've blurred the line here, buddy boy. Seriously, though, even if she were single, I wouldn't have a chance. The line of people who want Tina Fey's attention is already way too long. We shot most of our scenes on the street in New York, and this was around the time she was doing her Sarah Palin impersonation on *Saturday Night Live.* She was like royalty at that time. I mean, she's always royalty, but especially at that time. You've never seen somebody more beloved by an entire city. Strangers were constantly walking up and saying hello or telling her how much they loved her. It was insane to watch. I've never seen anything like it.

Q19

PLAYBOY: You've never had fans approach you on the street?

DINKLAGE: Well, yeah, but not in that volume. I don't know if I could deal with that. I did Comic-Con in San Diego once, and I couldn't even leave the hotel. *Game of Thrones* fans are the nicest people ever, but a thousand nice people coming at me gives me claustrophobia. And I can't wear a pair of sunglasses and pull my hat down and just disappear. I'm four and a half feet tall, so I sort of stand out.

Q20

PLAYBOY: Last year you gave a commencement speech at your alma mater, Bennington College, and walked onstage with a mace. You mentioned that a student gave it to you. Was that true?

DINKLAGE: It was. His name was Ben, I think, and he just handed it to me five minutes before I went out. He said it was a gift. It was actually quite heavy. That kid knew what he was doing. Hopefully he's a successful sculptor right now. The interesting thing was, the ball part of it, which he had bronzed or silvered or whatever, was an artichoke. He had dipped an artichoke in bronze. So if you smelted it, you could probably have a meal afterward. I left the mace with my mom. I think it's on her mantel right now. The next day I had to fly out to do a job, and I couldn't take a mace on the plane with me. My mom offered to take it off my hands, and it's still there. I think she's using it as protection out in Jersey.

J. J. ABRAMS

(continued from page 56)

from here in Santa Monica. I thought, He's a Crossroads kid? Growing up in Brentwood, I knew kids like him. I had never met Michael, but this idea that he was a Crossroads kid suddenly demystified him for me. I met him and immediately started giving him shit, and he was giving me shit. He liked me because I wasn't afraid of him and I understood who he was, which was someone who was a little freaked out by how big he'd become so fast.

PLAYBOY: Who's an up-and-coming director to keep an eye on?

ABRAMS: Rian Johnson. I love what he did with *Looper,* the scope of the movie and the emotion—and that moment when we discover who the Rainmaker is is one of the most chilling, awesome moments I've seen in movies in a long time. He has a big career ahead of him.

PLAYBOY: Your career is about as big as anybody's in Hollywood right now. You're as famous as many actors in your films and shows.

ABRAMS: First of all, I don't feel I'm remotely famous. But secondly, with what I'm doing and what I'm involved in, I feel I'm obviously riding coattails and working on projects that are bigger than all of us. A by-product of that is sometimes some notoriety, but it's all worthless if what's being made isn't of some quality. I certainly never wanted to become a director because I was looking to be famous. I look at people I know, certainly actors like Tom, who literally cannot go anywhere. That's a miserable thing. I go out all the time, and people don't recognize me at all.

PLAYBOY: So women aren't throwing themselves at you? Isn't that what's supposed to happen when you get big in show business?

ABRAMS: It's not happening. What's that about? [*laughs*] What I usually get isn't a sexual thing. It's usually some dude with hair too long in the back giving me a Vulcan salute or, more recently, saying, "May the Force be with you." I haven't gotten a lot of the more appealing versions you're referring to.

PLAYBOY: You went to Sarah Lawrence, which was traditionally an all-women's college and still skews heavily female. As a straight guy at Sarah Lawrence, you must have been quite busy.

ABRAMS: The ratio was spectacular, I won't lie. But I also got to be in rooms with a lot of women and, no joke, a lot of interesting conversations. It was almost like being a fly on the wall, where you'd actually get to hear and see what it's like to be a woman. As a writer it was a cool opportunity. The rhythm of conversation. The way women are with one another in private.

PLAYBOY: Is that where *Felicity* came to you?

ABRAMS: *Felicity* really had nothing to do with my college experience; it was much more about my time in high school. A young woman who was in my class was an amazing artist. I had never really talked to her, but she did the posters for all the plays and stuff. At graduation I finally said, "Listen, we've been at this school for years

together. I just wanted to say hi and say your work is unbelievable." The look on her face was so incredible. Her face literally changed. She was so stunned and kind of awkward and then very sweet about it. For some reason her reaction stayed with me. I always thought that was a cool story, about someone who approaches someone at the very end of high school. There was another girl at the school, whose name was Felicity, and I always thought that was a great name for a character. That's how ideas happen sometimes.

PLAYBOY: How did you go from Mr. Sensitive to action-movie guy?

ABRAMS: Look, all of it's me. *Felicity* was an idea I was excited about. But when we were doing the show, what struck me was there were no bad guys. It was frustrating to do a show where the biggest threat was whether Felicity was going to get a D or be late to class or kiss the wrong boy. Lovely and romantic and fun, yes, but incredibly low stakes. What you're always looking for on a TV show is the act-out, what makes you go "Ooh!" It was a hard thing to do because there were no murderers or vampires or villains.

So as a joke I pitched to the writers' room: What if Felicity were a spy? It would be awesome because she'd be going off on these crazy action adventures and could come back and tell Julie what she'd really done. Or she has these bruises and she'd be lying to Ben or Noel about what they were. Everybody looked at me like I was crazy. Then ABC said it was looking for a show with a young female lead, and that was why I wrote *Alias*.

PLAYBOY: Jennifer Garner from *Alias,* Evangeline Lilly from *Lost,* Anna Torv from *Fringe.* You certainly know how to find gorgeous unknown newcomers and turn them into gun-toting badasses in supertight clothing.

ABRAMS: Well, I was in love with Batgirl as a kid. I thought she was the sexiest thing in the history of time. In the beginning of *Batman,* whenever the cartoon version of Batgirl would swoop through and you'd know she was in the episode, I'd be hugely excited, because she was so unbearably hot. And then, obviously, on *The Avengers,* Diana Rigg was just so completely…yeah. It's a funny thing, because when I was growing up, usually men were the main characters and women were trophies. You know, the Bond girls were just kind of eye candy and fun. But I was always drawn to a different kind of woman, like Jenny Agutter in *Logan's Run.* There were certain women who made you go, "Oh, she was beautiful but also just as fierce as Logan." Think about when *Alien* came out. There's Ripley at the end in her underwear, getting into the space suit—rewind, please. Those are the women who grabbed me as a kid.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever have a wild-oats period?

ABRAMS: I've never done anything remotely serious in that regard.

PLAYBOY: Ever been arrested?

ABRAMS: Never been arrested.

PLAYBOY: Wrecked a hotel room?

ABRAMS: Nope.

PLAYBOY: Let's see—the Dharma Initiative, the parallel universes, the mystery boxes, galaxies far, far away. Call us half-baked, but some of your ideas sound as though they came out of smoking pot. Maybe a little? Or LSD?

ABRAMS: I have to say, I'm not a big partier, though I don't have anything against it. I'm kind of uncool.

PLAYBOY: When the *Star Wars* news broke, *Entertainment Weekly* wrote, "Disney didn't just pick a beloved director: They picked a guy whose name is synonymous with the whole millennial rise of geekdom as a cultural force."

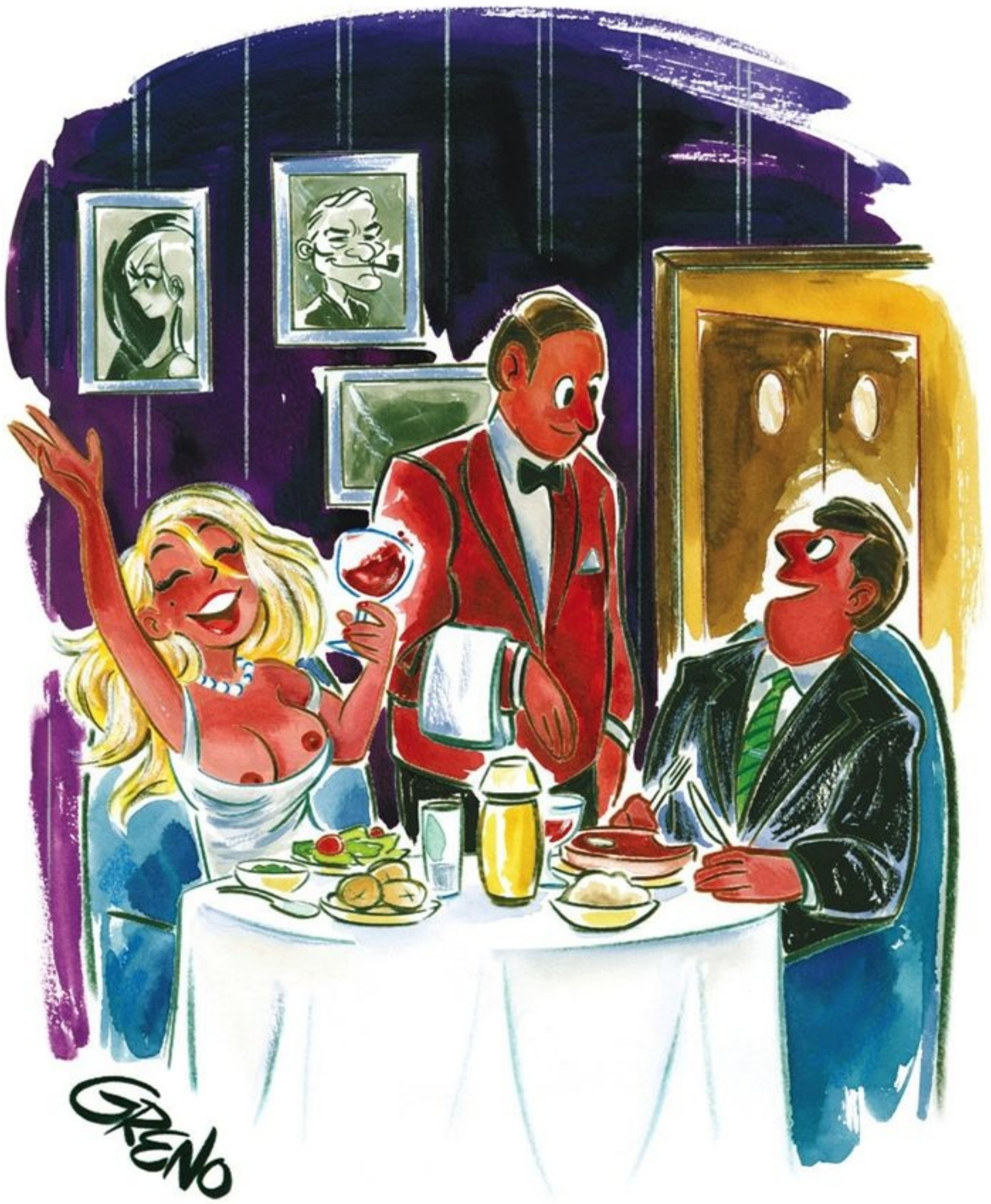
ABRAMS: Here's the thing: The pencil-necked geek guys with pocket protectors and tape on their glasses are the people who invented the iPod and the iPad and everything else everyone carries with them all the time. The digital age was foreseen by a group of short-sleeved, buttoned-down, white-shirted guys and their female equivalents who were designing the very stuff that's now ubiquitous. It's not that there's this millennial rise as much as we're incorporating into our daily lives the technology that is fulfilling our need for instantaneous communication and information. And there's a general understanding that smartphones didn't come from jocks.

PLAYBOY: What's your favorite game on your iPhone?

ABRAMS: Right now it's probably *Letterpress,* though *Scramble With Friends* is a close second.

PLAYBOY: How would your life have been different if you'd had an iPhone and a MacBook Pro instead of a Super 8 camera when you were starting out?

ABRAMS: I don't know. It's an age of insane distraction. The fact that kids are supposed to do their algebra homework on the same device that is a portal to every possible piece of entertainment—comedy and music and porn—is just bizarre. I don't know an adult who, if I gave them a laptop and said, "Go do your algebra," would spend more than five minutes doing their algebra. On the other end, you have things like the Khan Academy that are rocking the world and giving people access to learning like never before. The good definitely outweighs the negatives, but it's weird. The



"My compliments to the chef—but mostly to the bartender."

other day I was walking with my iPad Mini and thought, When I was a kid, just having a flashlight would have been cool, let alone something like this. Then you get into things like Final Cut Pro and After Effects, and they rival what's happening in big studios. We're starting to see evidence of people making movies with these tools in ways that rival professional moviemaking.

PLAYBOY: What have you seen lately?

ABRAMS: Oh my God, so many great short films. There was one called *Plot Device*—very funny. A guy named Andrew Kramer has a site called VideoCopilot.net that shows people how to do visual effects and after-effects. What he does is just incredible. I've since brought him over to my production company, Bad Robot. He's a genius. He did action-movie effects that until recently you could do only with a huge budget and complicated technology and teams of people. And he was doing it on his phone.

PLAYBOY: Hollywood is now an app.

ABRAMS: Not completely, but the idea that you can put in a missile attack or a car crash or whatever using this—it's all in fun. The point is, we've gone from Super 8 films, being limited to that frame, editing by hand, visual effects being zero—basically nothing unless you did back-winding on the film, and you were lucky if it worked—to literally making movies with an iPhone. So the question becomes, What are you going to do, since you can now do everything?

PLAYBOY: Do you think we'll still be going to the movies in 25 years?

ABRAMS: I do. We have a house in Maine, and when we go to movies there, the theaters have the worst projection and sound quality you could imagine. So places like that will need to improve the sound and quality of the screen to justify the experience. I've said before that 3-D isn't necessarily the answer. The best movies I've seen are so much more dimensional than 3-D. Having said that, I've seen some new 3-D technology that is impressive and could be fun. But like anything, doing it well is hard. To me, if every movie I got to do from this point on was not 3-D I'd be thrilled. Either way, I'm a big believer in the communal experience of seeing a movie, and that's not going away. It goes back to the very first storytellers around a campfire. The truth is, we need that campfire experience now more than ever. People need things to do beyond looking at their phones or Twitter or Facebook.

PLAYBOY: Do you track what people say about you online?

ABRAMS: A little. With *Star Wars* I glanced at some things here and there just to make sure I wasn't getting my ass kicked, and the response was kinder than I expected, which was nice. It's a funny thing. I feel very analog as a human being, which is of course ironic because I love editing, sound design and visual effects.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk sequels for a minute. Since you're doing *Star Wars,* does that put you out of the running to direct the third *Star Trek* movie?

ABRAMS: No. I would say it's a possibility. We're trying to figure out the next step. But it's like anything: It all begins with the story.

PLAYBOY: What about an *Alias* movie?

ABRAMS: We discuss it. In the right circumstance and situation I would definitely be open to it.

PLAYBOY: *Cloverfield II*?

ABRAMS: Part of me just wants to let it go, though we've had a couple of discussions about cool ways to do it. I'm looking forward to seeing *Pacific Rim* this summer. It feels like there are some really big monsters coming down the pike that could inspire something we do.

PLAYBOY: You're brilliant with reboots. Is there anything else you've thought about remaking? A company perhaps? Maybe a country?

ABRAMS: There was a company called Infocom I actually tried to reboot. People coming out of MIT started it and created these interactive fictional text adventures—really clever stuff, wonderfully packaged. I went to see if I could buy it, but some other dude got it literally the week before. I was also sad to hear that Atari declared bankruptcy. Atari represented the excitement and potential of what video games could be when I was a kid. It had an allure and a sense of future-looking cool.

PLAYBOY: What do you see in your future?

ABRAMS: I know it sounds like bullshit, but I feel so lucky that I've gotten to do everything I've done that nothing immediately comes to mind. The closest thing is travel. I've never been to Israel or India or Africa. I would love to spend more time in Japan, certainly with my family.

PLAYBOY: And professionally?

ABRAMS: Would it be nice to work with Meryl Streep? Yes. Would it be great to work on a movie that was considered an important film as opposed to a big entertainment? Sure, I would love it. But I feel I'm still at an age when a lot of that stuff is within reach. Again, it has to be the right thing at the right time. I'm not good at planning five years in advance, but there's still a lot I want to do before, you know....

PLAYBOY: Let's say it all ended tomorrow. What would you hope to find in heaven, or the sideways world or whatever you want to call it?

ABRAMS: Well, Steve Jobs and Thomas Edison would be in a huge wrestling match in the corner. Rod Serling would be smoking, writing a screenplay for something we all couldn't wait to read. My grandfather would be around and driving my mom crazy. There's an endless list of actors who would be fun to see in terms of creative people. And there would be a lot of art supplies and maybe paper and some pens in case inspiration struck.

PLAYBOY: You'd still be working in the hereafter?

ABRAMS: If a great idea hits me, yeah, why not?

"How many wonderful nights are you planning on staying, Mr. Smith?"

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ALI

(continued from page 101)

you're tagged, you can't think. You're just numb and you don't know where you're at. There's no pain, just that jarring feeling. But I automatically know what to do when that happens to me, sort of like a sprinkler system going off when a fire starts up. When I get stunned, I'm not really conscious of exactly where I'm at or what's happening, but I always tell myself that I'm to dance, run, tie my man up or hold my head way down. I tell myself all that when I'm conscious, and when I get tagged, I automatically do it.

PLAYBOY: [Before your recent fight with George Foreman] you called him all kinds of names. How does that help?

ALI: You mean when I called him the Mummy, 'cause he walks like one? Listen, if a guy loses his temper and gets angry, his judgment's off and he's not thinking as sharp as he should. But George wasn't angry. No, sir. George had this feeling that he was supreme. He believed what the press said—that he was unbeatable and that he'd whup me easy. The first three rounds, he still believed it. But when I started throwing punches at him in the fourth, George finally woke up and thought, Man, I'm in trouble. He was shocked.

PLAYBOY: Do you think Foreman was so confident of beating you that he didn't train properly?

ALI: No, George didn't take me lightly. Whoever I fight comes at me harder, because if you beat Muhammad Ali, you'll be the big man, the legend. Beating me is like beating Joe Louis or being the man who shot Jesse James. George just didn't realize how hard I am to hit and how hard I can hit.

PLAYBOY: Foreman claims he was drugged before the fight. Did you see any evidence of that?

ALI: George is just a sore loser. The truth is that the excuses started comin' as soon as George began to realize he lost. He couldn't take losing the championship. Now that I got it back, every day is a sunshiny day: I wake up and I know I'm the heavyweight champion of the world. Whatever restaurant I walk into, whatever park I go to, whatever school I visit, people are sayin', "The champ's here!" When I get on a plane, a man is always sayin' to his little boy, "Son, there goes the heavyweight champion of the world." Wherever I go, the tab is picked up, people want to see me and the TV wants me for interviews. That's what it means to be champ, and as long as I keep winning, it'll keep happenin'. So before I fight, I think, Whuppin' this man means everything. So many good things are gonna happen if I win I can't even imagine what they'll be!

PLAYBOY: Did you like the idea of Zaire as the fight site?

ALI: When I first won the championship from Sonny Liston, I was riding high and I didn't realize what I had. Now, the second time around, I appreciate the title, and I would've gone anywhere in the world to get it back. To be honest, when I first heard the fight would be in Africa, I just hoped it would go off right, being in a country that was supposed to be so undeveloped. Then, when we went down to Zaire, I saw they'd built a new stadium with lights and that everything would be ready, and I started getting used to the idea and liking it. And the more I thought about it, the more it grew on me, and then one day it just hit me how great it would be to win back my title in Africa. Being in Zaire opened my eyes.

PLAYBOY: In what way?

ALI: I saw black people running their own country. I saw a black president of a humble black people who have a modern country. There are good roads throughout Zaire, and Kinshasa has a nice downtown section that reminds you of a city in the States. Buildings, restaurants, stores, shopping centers—I could name you 1,000 things I saw that made me feel good. When I was in training there before the fight, I'd sit on the riverbank and watch the boats going by and see the 747 jumbo jets flying overhead, and I'd know there were black pilots and black stewardesses in 'em, and it just seemed so nice. In Zaire, everything was black—from the train drivers and hotel owners to the teachers in the schools and the pictures on the money. It was just like any other society, except it was all black, and because I'm black oriented and a Muslim, I was home there. I'm not home here. I'm trying to make it home, but it's not.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

ALI: Because black people in America will never be free so long as they're on the white man's land. Look, birds want to be free, tigers want to be free, everything wants to be free. We can't be free until we get our own land and our own country in North America. When we separate from America and take maybe 10 states, then we'll be free. Free to make our own laws, set our own taxes, have our own courts, our own judges, our own schoolrooms, our own currency, our own passports.

PLAYBOY: Since it's unlikely they'll get one carved out of—or paid for by—the U.S., are you pessimistic about America's future race relations?

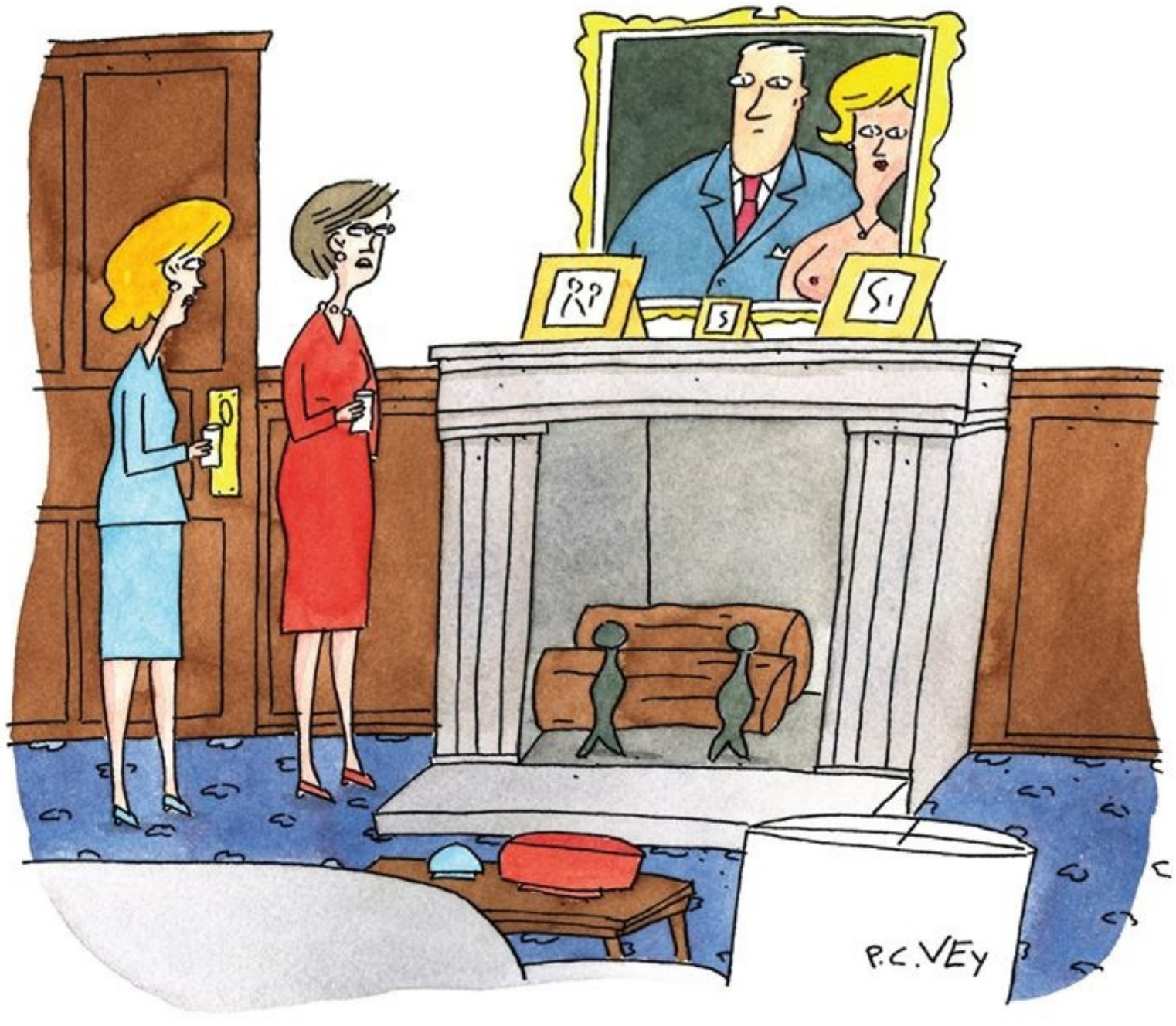
ALI: America don't have no future! America's going to be destroyed! Allah's going to divinely chastise America! Violence, crimes, earthquakes—there's gonna be all kinds of trouble. America's going to pay for all its lynchings and killings of slaves and what it's done to black people. America's day is over—and if it doesn't do justice to the black man and separate, it gonna burn!

PLAYBOY: Elijah Muhammad preached that all white men are blue-eyed devils. Do you believe that?

ALI: We know that every individual white ain't devil-hearted, and we got black people who are devils—the worst devils I've run into can be my own kind. When I think about white people, it's like there's 1,000 rattlesnakes outside my door and maybe 100 of them want to help me. But they all look alike, so should I open my door and hope that the 100 who want to help will keep the other 900 off me, when only one bite will kill me? What I'm sayin' is that if there's 1,000 rattlesnakes out there and 100 of them mean good—I'm still gonna shut my door. I'm gonna say, "I'm sorry, you nice 100 snakes, but you don't really matter."

PLAYBOY: Didn't white freedom riders of the 1960s—at least four of whom were murdered—demonstrate that many whites were ready to risk their lives for black civil rights?

ALI: Look, we been told there's gonna be whites who help blacks. And we also know



"I don't know who she is. Howard just had her painted in one day."

there's gonna be whites who'll escape Allah's judgment, who won't be killed when Allah destroys this country—mainly some Jewish people who really mean right and do right. But we look at the situation as a whole. We have to.

Yes, a lot of these white students get hurt 'cause they want to help save their country. But listen, your great-granddaddy told my great-granddaddy that when my granddaddy got grown, things would be better. Then your granddaddy told my granddaddy that when my daddy was born, things would be better. Your daddy told my daddy that when I got grown, things would be better. But they ain't. Are you tellin' me that when my children get grown, things'll be better for black people in this country?

PLAYBOY: No, we're just trying to find out how you honestly feel about whites.

ALI: The only thing the white man can offer me is a job in America—he ain't gonna offer me no flag, no hospitals, no land, no freedom. But once a man knows what freedom is, he's not satisfied even being the president of your country. And as Allah is my witness, I'd die today to prove it. If I could be president of the U.S. tomorrow and do what I can to help my people or be in an all-black country of 25 million Negroes and my job would be to put garbage in the truck, I'd be a garbageman. And if that included not just me but also my children and all my seed from now till forever, I'd still rather have the lowest job in a black society than the highest in a white society. If we got our own country, I'd empty trash ahead of being president of the U.S.—or being Muhammad Ali, the champion.

PLAYBOY: You've earned nearly $10 million in fight purses in the past two years alone. Would you really part with all your wealth so easily?

ALI: I'd do it in a minute. Last week, I was out taking a ride and I thought, I'm driving this Rolls-Royce and I got another one in the garage that I hardly ever use that cost $40,000. I got a Scenicruiser Greyhound bus that sleeps 14 and cost $120,000 and another bus that cost $42,000—$162,000 just in mobile homes. My training camp cost $350,000, and I just spent $300,000 remodeling my house in Chicago. I got all that and a lot more.

Well, I was driving down the street and I saw a little black man wrapped in an old coat standing on a corner with his wife and little boy, waiting for a bus to come along—and there I am in my Rolls-Royce. The little boy had holes in his shoes, and I started thinkin' that if he was my little boy, I'd break into tears. And I started crying.

PLAYBOY: How has Elijah Muhammad's death affected the Black Muslims?

ALI: Naturally, it was saddening, because it's bad to lose him physically, but if we should lose him in ourselves, that's worse.

PLAYBOY: What difference did he make in your own life?

ALI: He was my Jesus, and I had love for both the man and what he represented. Like Jesus Christ and all of God's prophets, he represented all good things, and having passed on, he is missed. But prophets never die spiritually, for their words and works live on. Elijah Muhammad was my savior, and everything I have came from him—my thoughts, my efforts to help my people, how I eat, how I talk, my name.

PLAYBOY: Do you think you could ever lose the faith?

ALI: It's possible that I can lose faith, so I gotta pray, and to keep myself fired up, I gotta talk like I'm talkin' now. It's the kind of talk that keeps us Muslims together. And you can tell a bunch of Muslims: no violence, no hate, no cigarettes, no fightin', no stealin', all happy. It's a miracle. Most Negro places you be in, you see folks fussin' and cussin', eatin' pork chops and women runnin' around. You've seen the peace and unity of my training camp—it's all Elijah Muhammad's spirit and his teachings. Black people never acted like this before. If every one of us in camp was just like we were before we heard Elijah Muhammad, you wouldn't be able to see for all the smoke. You'd hear things like "Hey, man, what's happenin', where's the ladies? What we gonna drink tonight? Let's get that music on and party!" And hey, this isn't an Islamic center. We're happy today. And we're better off than if we talked Christianity and said, "Jesus loves you, brother. Jesus died for your sins, accept Jesus Christ."

PLAYBOY: You find something wrong with that?

ALI: Christianity is a good philosophy if you live it, but it's controlled by white people who preach it but don't practice it. They just organize it and use it any which way they want to. If the white man lived Christianity, it would be different, but I tell you, I think it's against nature for European people to live Christian lives. Their nations were founded on killing, on wars. France, Germany, the bunch of 'em—it's been one long war ever since they existed. And if they're not killing each other over there, they're shooting Indians over here. And if they're not after the Indians, they're after the reindeer and every other living thing they can kill, even elephants. It's always violence and war for Christians.

Muslims, though, live their religion—we ain't hypocrites. We submit entirely to Allah's will. We don't eat ham, bacon or pork. We don't smoke. And everybody knows that we honor our women. You can see our sisters on the street from 10 miles away, their white dresses dragging along the ground. Young women in this society parade their bodies in all them freak clothes—miniskirts and pantsuits—but our women don't wear them. A woman who's got a beautiful body covers it up and humbles herself to Allah and also turns down all the modern conveniences. Nobody else do that but Muslim women. You hear about Catholic sisters—but they do a lot of screwing behind doors. Ain't nobody gonna believe a woman gonna go all her life and say, "I ain't never had a man," and is happy. She be crazy. That's against nature. And a priest saying he'd never touch a woman—that's against nature too. What's he gonna do at night? Call upon the hand of the Lord?

PLAYBOY: Are Muslim women allowed to have careers, or are they supposed to stay in the kitchen?

ALI: A lot of 'em got careers, working for and with their brothers, but you don't find 'em in no white man's office in downtown New York working behind secretarial desks. Too many black women been used in offices. And not even in bed—on the floor. We know it because we got office Negroes who've told us this. So we protect our women, 'cause women are the *(concluded on page 141)*

"You can't ALL have headaches!"

PLAYMATE NEWS

SHOWGIRL

CLAIRE SINCLAIR

MODERN PINUP STARLET

Claire Sinclair, 2011's Playmate of the Year, takes her talent and her curves to Las Vegas's Stratosphere theater for the burlesque show *Pin Up*. "It has always been a dream of mine to be part of a show based on the iconic pinup girl," she says. Claire is being humble: She's not just part of the show, she's the girl front and center, with stockings, red lips, bangs and a coquettishness not put together so delightfully since Bettie Page. "This show brings the classic pinup-girl calendar to life month by month through live music, dance and variety," says Claire. "It's classy, sexy and, most important, fun."

PLAYMATE NEWS

#twitpic

@Ciara_Price Miss November 2011 has curtains but doesn't close them.

girlTALK

1. PMOY 2012 **Jaclyn Swedberg** looked rocker chic in her Bunny outfit at the NAMM music trade show in Anaheim in January.

2. Miss February 2013 **Shawn Dillon** hosted the Wahoo Smackdown, a fishing contest at Bimini Big Game Club Resort and Marina in the Bahamas. Shawn also went into a shark cage. She's one brave woman.

3. Miss September 2012 **Alana Campos** and Miss May 2012 **Nikki Leigh** shot extras for the *Parker* DVD.

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Carrie Stevens, Miss June 1997 and owner of Centerfold Chefs, tried her spatula on *MasterChef*. We'll let her have the last word on judge Gordon Ramsay: "Happy, healthy, well-adjusted people don't make careers out of bullying," Carrie says. "He clearly has small-penis syndrome."

House of Style

"To hire Los Angeles designer **Kelly Wearstler** is to buy into her singularly bedazzling, high-chroma style," wrote *Architectural Digest* in an article highlighting a Bel Air home outfitted by Miss September 1994. The new layout? Closets bigger than the girls' apartments on *Girls*.

PLAYMATE* FLASHBACK

Fifteen years ago this month bank manager DEANNA BROOKS became Miss May 1998 after slipping her nude photos to a former classmate who worked as a butler at the Playboy Mansion. Shortly thereafter Deanna lost her gig at the bank but went on to become one of the most active Playmates working at our hottest parties and events.

ALI

(continued from page 138)

field that produces our nation. And if you can't protect your women, you can't protect your nation. Man, I was in Chicago a couple of months ago and saw a white fella take a black woman into a motel room. He stayed with her two or three hours and then walked out—and a bunch of brothers saw it and didn't even say nothin'. They should have thrown rocks at his car or kicked down the door while he was in there screwing her—do something to let him know you don't like it. How can you be a man when another man can come get your woman or your daughter or your sister—and take her to a room and screw her—and, nigger, you don't even protest?

But nobody touches our women, white or black. Put a hand on a Muslim sister and you are to die. You may be a white or black man in an elevator with a Muslim sister, and if you pat her on the behind, you're supposed to die right there.

PLAYBOY: You're beginning to sound like a carbon copy of a white racist. Let's get it out front: Do you believe that lynching is the answer to interracial sex?

ALI: A black man *should* be killed if he's messing with a white woman. And white men have always done that. They lynched niggers for even looking at a white woman; they'd call it reckless eyeballing and bring out the rope. Raping, patting, mischief, abusing, showing our women disrespect—a man should die for that. And not just white men—black men too. We will kill you, and the brothers who don't kill you will get their behinds whipped and probably get killed themselves if they let it happen and don't do nothin' about it. Tell it to the president—he ain't gonna do nothin' about it. Tell it to the FBI: We'll kill anybody who tries to mess around with our women. Ain't nobody gonna bother them.... Let me ask you something.

PLAYBOY: Shoot.

ALI: You think I'm as pretty as I used to be? I was so pretty. Somebody took some pictures of me and they're in an envelope here, so let me stop talking for a few seconds, 'cause I want you to take a look at 'em....

Hey, I'm still pretty! What a wonderful face! Don't I look good in these pictures? I can see I gotta stay in shape if I want to stay pretty, but that's so hard. I've been fighting for 21 years and just thinkin' about it makes me tired. I ain't 22 anymore—I'm 33 and I can't fight like I did eight or 10 years ago. Maybe for a little while, but I can't keep it up. I used to get in a ring and dance and jump and hop around for the whole 15 rounds. Now I can only do that for five or six, and then I have to slow down and rest for the next two or three rounds. I might jump around again in the 11th and 12th rounds, or I might even go the whole rest of the fight like I used to, but I have to work much more to be able to do it now; weight is harder to get off, and it takes more out of me to lose it. That means getting out every day and running a couple of miles, coming into the gym and punching the bags four days a week and eatin' the right foods. But I like to eat the wrong foods. I'll go to a coffee shop and order a stack of pancakes with strawberry preserves, blueberry preserves, whipped cream and butter, and then hit them hot pancakes with that good maple syrup and then drink a cold glass of milk. At dinnertime, I'll pull into a McDonald's and order two big double cheeseburgers and a chocolate milk shake—and the next day I weigh 10 pounds more. Some people can eat and not gain weight, but if I just look at food, my belly gets bigger. That's why, when I'm training, about all I eat is broiled steaks, chicken and fish, fresh vegetables and salads. I don't even get to see them other things I like.

PLAYBOY: Since you've already told us that age has been steadily eroding your skills, what makes you think you'll still be champion when you're 38?

ALI: Hey, Jersey Joe Walcott won his title when he was 37. Sugar Ray Robinson fought till he was in his 40s, and Archie Moore went until he was 51.

PLAYBOY: At which point you took him apart with ease. Would you want to wind up your career the same way?

ALI: Archie didn't end up hurt, and he's still intelligent—in spite of thinking Foreman could beat me. Going five more years don't mean going till I'm 51, and I can do it just by slowing down my style. You also got to remember I spent three and a half years in exile, when they took away my title because I wouldn't be drafted. That's three and a half years less of tusslin', trainin' and fightin', and if not for all that rest, I don't think I'd be in the same shape I am today. Because of my age, I don't have all of those three and a half years coming to me, but I have some of them.

PLAYBOY: Was that period of enforced idleness a bitter part of your life?

ALI: I wasn't bitter at all. I had a good time speaking at colleges and meeting the students—whites, blacks and all kinds, but mainly whites, who supported me a hundred percent. They were as much against the Vietnam war as I was.

PLAYBOY: When you returned to the ring in 1970, most boxing observers felt you'd lost a good deal of your speed and timing. Did you think so?

ALI: Nope, I thought I was about the same, maybe even better.

PLAYBOY: Does your claim of being the greatest mean that you think you could have beaten every heavyweight champion in modern ring history?

ALI: I can't really say. Rocky Marciano, Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, Joe Walcott, Ezzard Charles—they all would have given me trouble. I can't know if I would've beaten them all, but I do know this: I'm the most talked-about, the most publicized, the most famous and the most colorful fighter in history. And I'm the fastest heavyweight—with feet and hands—who ever lived. Besides all that, I'm the onliest poet laureate boxing's ever had. One other thing too: If you look at pictures of all the former champions, you know in a flash that I'm the best-looking champion in history. It all adds up to being the greatest, don't it?

Excerpted from the November 1975 issue.

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WHO WILL BE OUR PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR?

WHY DON'T THE COMMUNISTS LIKE THIS GUY?

MACHO CAMACHO'S TRAGIC FINAL ROUND.

NEXT MONTH

WAYLON JENNINGS + METALLICA = ERIC CHURCH.

THE BIG REVEAL—THERE ARE 12 FINALISTS BUT NO SWIVELING CHAIRS. INSTEAD, ONE MAN, WITH THE HELP OF MILLIONS, HAS SELECTED ONE WOMAN TO JOIN THE LIKES OF SHANNON TWEED, JENNY MCCARTHY, BRANDE RODERICK, DALENE KURTIS AND JACLYN SWEDBERG AS PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR. WILL YOU BE SURPRISED? ONLY IF SHE ISN'T YOUR CHOICE.

ART OF REVOLT—FOR MANY CHINESE, AI WEIWEI IS A HERO WHO USES HIS ART AND GLOBAL CELEBRITY TO CALL FOR FREEDOM. TO THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, HE'S A PROVOCATEUR AND SERIOUS THREAT. WE SENT **DAVID SHEFF** TO BEIJING FOR THE *PLAYBOY INTERVIEW,* AND AS YOU WILL SEE, AI COULD BE THE SPARK THAT STARTS A FIRE.

DOWN AND OUT—NO ONE EVER KNOCKED OUT HECTOR "MACHO" CAMACHO, A FORMER CAR THIEF WHO DOMINATED THE RING IN THE 1980S, WINNING TITLES IN THREE WEIGHT CLASSES. IN NOVEMBER POLICE FOUND HIM WITH A BULLET IN HIS HEAD AND A BAG OF COCAINE IN THE CAR. WHO FINALLY TOOK DOWN THE CHAMP? **BOB DRURY** INVESTIGATES.

GETTING BACK TO NORMAL—CARL HAS BEEN SOBER FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS, AND GRETA IS MARRIED, BARELY. YET HERE THEY ARE, TOGETHER BUT APART, SUNNING, GAMBLING, NEGOTIATING A RELATIONSHIP THAT FEELS RIGHT AND WRONG AND HAS NOWHERE TO GO. IT'S A STORY OF MISGUIDED LOVE BY **LIESL SCHILLINGER.**

JURASSIC HEIST—ERIC PROKOPI IS A "COMMERCIAL PALEONTOLOGIST." THAT MEANS HE'S A BUSINESSMAN, NOT A SCIENTIST, AND IT EXPLAINS WHY HE HAD JUST SOLD A *TARBOSAURUS BATAAR* SKELETON WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED. BUT WHO REALLY OWNS THOSE BONES? **BRETT FORREST** DIGS DEEP INTO A MYSTERIOUS BLACK MARKET.

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LICENSE TO GRILL—THANKS TO A FOOD REVOLUTION, THE FINE ART OF GRILLING IS MORE REFINED THAN EVER. WE TAP TOP PIT MASTERS AND CHEFS FOR TIPS ON FIRING UP THE BARBECUE AND SHARE A JUICY MENU FOR CARNIVORES.

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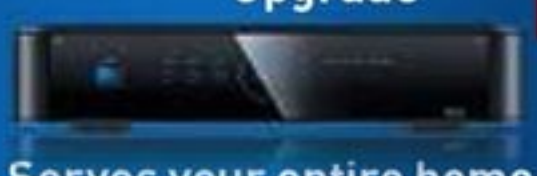

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"24-MONTH AGREEMENT: EARLY CANCELLATION WILL RESULT IN A FEE OF $20/MONTH FOR EACH REMAINING MONTH. Must maintain 24 consecutive months of any DIRECTV base programming package ($29.99/mo. or above) or any qualifying international service bundle. Advanced Receiver-DVR fee ($10/mo.) required for DVR lease. Advanced Receiver-HD fee ($10/mo.) required for HD Receiver lease. Advanced Receiver fee ($25/mo.) required for Advanced Whole-Home DVR, HD DVR and TiVo HD DVR from DIRECTV lease. TiVo service fee ($5/mo.) required for TiVo HD DVR from DIRECTV lease. If you have 2 Receivers and/or one Receiver and a Client/Enabled TV/Device, the fee is $6/mo. For the 3rd and each additional Receiver and/or Client/Enabled TV/Device on your account, you are charged an additional fee of $6/mo. per Receiver, Client and/or Enabled TV/Device. **NON-ACTIVATION CHARGE OF $150 PER RECEIVER MAY APPLY. ALL EQUIPMENT IS LEASED AND MUST BE RETURNED TO DIRECTV UPON CANCELLATION, OR UNRETURNED EQUIPMENT FEES APPLY. VISIT directv.com/legal OR CALL 1-800-DIRECTV FOR DETAILS. ^^GENIE HD DVR UPGRADE OFFER:** Includes instant rebates on one Advanced Whole-Home DVR and up to 3 DIRECTV C31 Clients (aka "Genie Mini") with activation of the ENTERTAINMENT Package or above; OPTIMO MAS Package or above; or any qualifying international service bundle, which shall include the PREFERRED CHOICE programming package. **Free upgrade offer requires an Advanced Whole-Home DVR and at least one DIRECTV C31 Client. $99 applies for single-room set-up.** Whole-Home HD DVR functionality requires an Advanced Whole-Home DVR (model HR34) connected to the primary television and a DIRECTV C31 Client (aka "Genie Mini"), H25 HD Receiver(s) or an RVU-capable TV/Device in each additional room. Limit of three remote viewings per Advanced Whole-Home DVR at a time. Visit directv.com/genie for complete details. **INSTALLATION:** Standard professional installation in up to four rooms only. Custom installation extra.

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DIRECTV On Demand: Access to available DIRECTV On Demand programming is based on package selection. Actual number of TV shows and movies will vary. Additional fees apply for new releases. Some DIRECTV On Demand content requires an HD DVR (HR20 or later) or DVR (R22 or later), DIRECTV CINEMA Connection Kit and broadband Internet service with speeds of 750 kbps or higher and a network router with an available Ethernet port are required. Visit directv.com/cinema for details.

PLAYBOY TV PROGRAMMING OFFER: Upon request customer will receive Free Playboy TV for three months. In the fourth month service continues automatically at $15.99/month unless customer calls to cancel.

ADULT PROGRAMMING: Billing is discreet. Charges will not include channels or titles on your bill. Adult programming contains explicit sexual content, complete nudity and graphic adult situations. Viewer discretion is advised. Must be 18 years or older to purchase. DIRECTV System has a feature that restricts access to channels.

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